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A call to care: exploring the social politics of compassionate
care and rescue in the context of a care programme for
children in contemporary Swaziland

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Abstract

This paper draws on ethnographic research conducted in 2011 and 2012 in an abandoned mining town in Northern Swaziland. In 2001 the isolated ‘ghost town’ was bought by a Faith Based Organisation and transformed into what the organisation terms a vibrant ‘sustainable orphan village’. Against a backdrop of political uncertainty, deepening economic-crisis related poverty, increasing numbers of children in need of extra-familial care and the parallel proliferation of humanitarian organisations being set up to deal with these systemic vulnerabilities, this thesis explores the practices and politics of childcare and rescue in contemporary Swaziland. Focusing on a single extended case study, I trace the material affects and effects of interventionist help. Situating this study in a broader global, particularly Christian philanthropic preoccupation with the project of ‘saving children’, this study forms part of a burgeoning body of anthropological theory and research that critically explores the logic and practice of what Didier Fassin (2011) calls ‘humanitarian government’.

Key words: children, care, HIV/AIDS, humanitarianism.

List of Acronyms

ACPF: African Child Policy Forum

BMS: Bulembu Ministries Swaziland

BCA: Bulembu Christian Academy

CCH: Child Headed Households

CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child

FBO: Faith Based Organisation

OVC: Orphans and Vulnerable Children

NCP: Neighbourhood Care Point

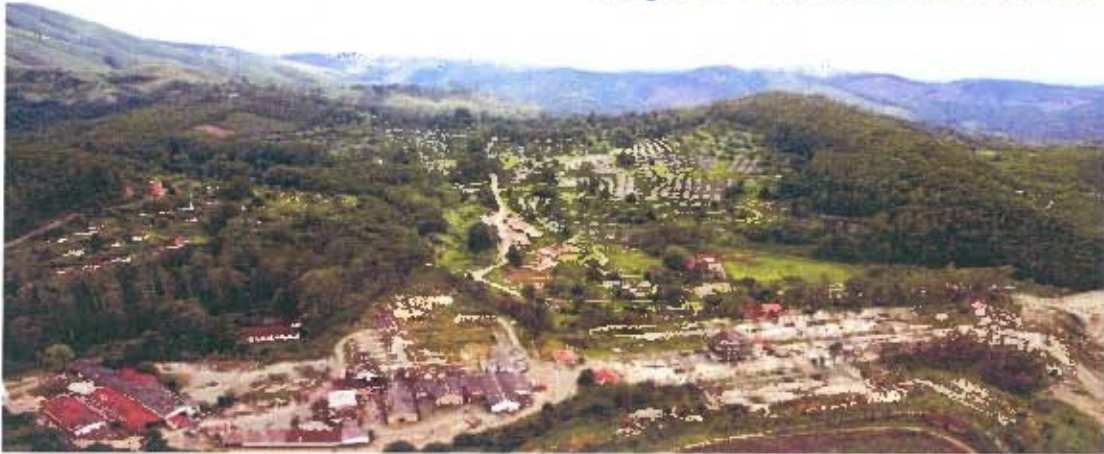
NERCHA: National Emergency Response Council on HIV and AIDS

SWD: Swaziland Welfare Department

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Chapter One: an introduction



An aerial view of Bulembu [available online:] www.bulembu.org

"Life in the end is about fixing holes. But there's another kind of hole and that is the wound that divides family. Sometimes this wound occurs the moment of birth, sometimes it happens later. We are all fixing what is broken. It's the task of a lifetime" (Verghese, 2010: 95).

1.1 Field notes, 18/01/2012

It's a deluge today. There is a cyclone on the Mozambican coast. It has not stopped raining for three days. The roads are rivers and today Bulembu really is the Island that one of the boys in my sample group depicted it to be. The road is too muddy to drive, the torrents too thick to see through. I am sitting at home in Mbabane, waiting for the signal of silence to come. I indulge in Marie Claire. I yearn for the return of the armchair anthropologist. But musings of disembodied, question free fieldwork and my internal excuse is momentary solace from the nagging guilt that has taken root in the pit of my stomach since the "beginning" of fieldwork. Since I arrived in Swaziland on the 5th of December, and since everything I'd always known suddenly turned into data - when home became the 'far and foreign'. But in this unbounded sea of information, could Marie Claire's 2012 January edition be considered data?

Reflecting on Marie Claire's October 2011 article, 'Ambition Impossible' on Hollywood Adoptions, a concerned reader writes: "I have always been surprised at the ethics behind Hollywood's superstars being able to jet into impoverished countries pick up a child and take it to LA to grow up among some of the wealthiest people in the world. There the child is raised by nannies and has access to more material possessions than their entire African village put together! Yes they are being

given access to good education, undeniably the key to their future, but are there not more positive and sustainable ways to uplift the lives of these children within their cultural heritage? One can't help but wonder where they honestly would be better off..."

Although the reader is specifically referring to celebrity intercountry adoptions, this value-laden question of where children categorized as "orphaned and vulnerable" would be "better off", and how their lives should best be lived, has resurfaced during my fieldwork in relation to both intercountry adoption and other humanitarian practices set up to deal with the systemic vulnerabilities attached to what is so commonly referred to as Swaziland's 'orphan problem'. Indeed, the reader's question of whether there are more positive and sustainable ways to uplift the lives of 'these' children within their cultural heritage, is the very basis of my chosen fieldsite's "cultural" vision. It is also one of the key incentives behind the government's recent closure of intercountry adoption and their insistence on the Neighborhood Care Point (NCP) model, providing cost-effective *in situ* "physical, psychosocial and other support to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC)¹" (Dlamini, 2007: 5; *perscom*. 2012). It is this growing preoccupation with a child's place and the politics around the placement of socially displaced children and the increasing number of individuals stepping into 'fix' familial 'holes' in the context of epidemiologically and socio-politically induced precarity, with which this thesis is concerned.

1.2 Situating the study

When the Swazi government decided to place an indeterminate ban on intercountry adoptions on the 25th February 2010 for reasons pertaining to 'cultural preservation' and a "worrying rise in the demand for Swazi children by foreign nationals" as

¹ There has been a self conscious terminological transition initiated by UNAIDS, from the label AIDS orphan to the more inclusive term OVC in official policy documents and academic and popular discourse (Giese & Meintjies, 2006). The implementation of the term OVC is an attempt to "make visible", children indirectly affected and „made vulnerable" by the epidemic and in the context of poverty, which according to UNICEF's 2005 The state of the worlds children "threatens all aspects of childhood" (Bellamy, 2005; Richter et al, 2004).

opposed to a lack of “internal adoptions”², I became interested in the contemporary political usages of culture in relation to children, childhood and child citizenship. Irrespective of the numerous other contributing factors to the halting of intercountry adoption that arose during my fieldwork, i.e. the often corrupt and inefficient management of the practice; the notion that “Swazi children should be brought up within the boundaries of their nation of birth” emerged most strongly and publically as the driving force behind this decision. In a series of interviews, the Deputy Prime Minister, raised concerns about internationally adopted Swazi children being ‘rootless’ and ‘losing’ their culture³ - an argument that emphasises an isomorphic connection between place, culture and personhood and mirrors UNICEF’s and other international/national organisations’ preferences for the development of (non-institutional) alternatives to intercountry adoption that “keep un-parented children in their countries of origin” (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Bartholet, 2007:5). Yet, in contexts of extreme socio-economic adversity, political unrest⁴, overburdened social services and according to the UNICEF’s 2010 annual report over 108 000 children (a staggering 31% of all children under the age of 19) estimated to be orphaned and made vulnerable by the epidemic⁵, the government’s decision generated significant criticism.

With its roots in colonialism, contexts of war, epidemiological crises and accelerated by globalisation and the transnational market economy, intercountry adoption is marked by the geographies of unequal power and often described as both an act of “love and violence”, and has long been a site of much contradiction and controversy (Bartholet, 2007: 153; Briggs & Marre, 2009: 1, 2; Mazmur, 2009: 145). Over the past 30 years the number of families wanting to adopt children from other countries, in a direction that follows the modern routes of capital has grown substantially.

² Available [online]: <http://adoptionupdate.wordpress.com/2010/03/13/international-adoption-alerts-march-2010/> [03/05/2011]

³ Available [online]: <http://chinaadoptiontalk.blogspot.com/2010/08/swaziland-extends-suspension-of.html>

⁴ Swaziland’s deepening economic/ fiscal crisis is increasingly in the national/international news. In April this year over 7000 citizens marched in pro-democracy protests against deepening political economic injustice and for the unbanning of opposition parties, the promotion of freedom of speech and the freeing of political prisoners in Africa’s last absolute monarchy. See Masuku, B. 2011 ‘Time for Intensive Care’. Available [Online] <http://allafrica.com/stories/20110408803.html> [04/05/2011].

⁵ According to a recent UNICEF report, 34% of children in Swaziland live in a household with neither their mother nor their father – the highest out of the three other African countries under study, namely Zambia, Malawi and South Africa (UNAIDS, 2008: vii, 8).

However, irrespective of international laws, such as the Hague Convention on International Adoption (1989/1994) put in place to “promote ethical and transparent” adoption processes “in the best interests of the child”, lack of regulation coupled with the potential for financial gain, “has spurred the growth of an industry around adoption where profit” rather than ‘best interests’ predominates (Selman (in Bowie), 2004: 266; Mazmur, 2009: 146). Critics often deplore the practice as contemporary imperialism “allowing dominant developed countries to strip away...developing countries’ most precious resources” – a conception which perhaps underlies the Swazi Prime Minister’s own perspective (Martin, 2007: 174 (in Mazmur)). Consequently, there have recently been a series of closures in the intercountry adoption ‘market’ and the tightening of policy in sending countries, which has led to a drastic drop in the number of intercountry adoptions since 2004 to the extent to which Bartholet labels it as “under siege”⁶ (Briggs & Marre, 2009: 20).

Concerns over this notion of cultural rootlessness in relation to intercountry adoption from African sending countries, concerns built upon spatially bounded conceptions of culture, something innately ‘gained’ and as a result ‘lost’ through one’s separation from place, have proliferated in the global media space. A recent BBC news article; ‘Adoption from Africa: concerns over dramatic rise’ (2012) cogently expresses these anxieties. The author states; “people wanting to adopt children are increasingly turning to Africa because changes in adoption patterns and laws in other countries have resulted in a shortage of adoptable children”. Citing Mr. Mugawe, the director of the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), he writes, “Every child has the right to be reared in the country and culture in which it was which it was born...it is true that a number of children have actually benefited from adoption, but it is the best option to have other options explored”.

In this regard, the Swazi government’s decision to halt intercountry adoption is part of a much larger set of anxieties surrounding the global circulation of children and the persistent politics surrounding the re-making of family and the formation of new

⁶ On the 17/10/2011 I listened to an SAFM talk show on the issues surrounding foreign adoption policy in South Africa. The spokesperson from www.adoption.org.za repeatedly specified the increasing strictures placed on intercountry adoption as a way of making it increasingly difficult for foreigners to adopt South African children and for ‘nationalistic’ or rather ‘cultural’ reasons, encouraging internal/national adoption.

‘geographies’ of kinship. Although the current closure was merely a catalyst for more considered analysis, the ban provides immediate insight into the ways in which, in the rare context of an African country experiencing a negative growth rate⁷, children are a central trope in the discourse of national development and a central site/source of ‘hope’ and humanitarian engagement. At a glance, the shift in policy and emphasis on finding *in-situ* alternatives, reveals the ways children are imagined and valued, and how notions of culture, belonging and home are being conceptualised, constructed and mobilised in contemporary Swaziland. The government’s decision and indeed the visions of my chosen fieldsite further draw attention to the ways in which a nation’s destiny is anthropomorphically linked to children’s welfare and development – a political linkage that, as social theorists such as Cheney (2007: 12) and Malkki (2011) assert has very real implications for children’s own personal destinies.

I have, however, chosen to explore the questions raised by the government’s decision to halt intercountry adoption indirectly. Whilst remaining a significant conceptual backdrop and a means of thinking through the ways state policy and interventionist ‘help’ is folded into the intimate details of everyday life, this thesis is specifically concerned with the practices and consequences of what *is* being done, with what the ACPF spokesperson above refers to as “the other options”. This thesis is concerned with what alternative ‘culturally appropriate’ interventions *are* being put in place to deal with the broad social consequences of the epidemic and its impact on Swaziland’s children in particular⁸.

Although a (limited) number of both informal and formal care options exist for children; my research pointed to the proliferation of a particular model of care emerging in Swaziland in response to the profound demographic shifts brought about by AIDS related mortality that falls outside a ‘traditional’ institutional framework and that actively resists the practice of intercountry adoption⁹ (Chirwa, 2002: 107). This model of care can be seen to uphold the now internationally sanctioned notion of the “pressing need” to ensure that “family based care” is available for children (Meintjes, Moses & Berry, 2007; UNICEF, 2004: 15). It attempts to stand in opposition to

⁷ [Available online:] <http://www.afrol.com/articles/24707>

⁸ Alternative care of children is divided into informal care (intra-familial care) and formal care (residential care and foster care) (UNICEF, 2008: 7).

⁹ See also: <http://www.pasturevalley.com/children.html>

‘dormitory style’ residential care that has over the years received the bulk of the criticism that surrounds institutions¹⁰ (Meintjes et al, 2007; Murtaugh, 2010: 18). With a vision of providing caring and stable homes to children left without psychosocial and economic support from their parents and extended families, this model involves an attempt to replicate ‘traditional’ networks of familial care in a ‘homelike’ environment (UNICEF: 2004, 15; Meintjes et al, 2007). Children are housed in individual units in family-like arrangements where they can receive more individual attention and “bond” as a family (Meintjes et al, 2007: 19). These units usually make up a children’s village and, like the iconic SOS children’s village model, is often big enough to include its own clinic and school (Murtaugh, 2010: 19). This supposedly culturally appropriate model of orphan care, most prolific in African countries is based on the notion that “traditionally in African cultures children belong to the whole community” and where this truism is no longer seen to hold tight due to the impact of the HIV epidemic (and other socio-economic related factors) on familial structures of care, organisations should attempt to provide support that emulates a “normal family and community environment” as far as possible (Chirwa, 2002: 107).

Hence, whilst I have gained insight into various care programmes in operation in the country¹¹, my primary field site exemplifies these goals and assumptions and as such appears to follow a broader continental shift from formal institutional models toward more adaptive community-modeled approaches to orphan care (Chirwa, 2002: 94, 108; Bray, 2003: 41).

1.3 The fieldsite

Growing up in Swaziland I had often heard about a place up North called Bulembu. It had operated as an asbestos mining town between 1939 and 2001, when the mining company went into liquidation and had to be closed town. Vivid descriptions of the mine closure describe its 10 000 residents to have almost left over night in search of employment elsewhere. It was said that since it had become a ghost town’ that the roads and buildings had crumbled from their emptiness and under the weeds.

¹⁰ The proliferation of children’s homes across Africa during the last decade is considerable. In Swaziland, 80% of children’s homes were established between 2000 and 2004 (UNICEF, 2008: 47)

¹¹ In 2010 I spent two weeks working at an NCP in Big Bend. During my fieldwork at the end of 2011 and beginning of 2012, I also visited two other (small scale) faith based residential care projects in both Mbabane, namely The Sandra Lee Centre in Mbabane and New Life Homes in Steki.

Years later the town had been bought up and rebuilt. Whilst searching for a place to pursue my research interest in alternative care for children in Swaziland, Bulembu came up again in conversation. On finding out that the town had been bought up by Bulembu Ministries Swaziland, a Faith Based Organisation and transformed into an ‘orphan town’, with the vision of rejuvenating the dilapidated ‘health-hazardous’ town into “a vibrant self-sustaining community” that “combines...innovative enterprise with orphan care” to over 300 of “Swaziland’s most vulnerable children” I became intrigued. (www.bulembu.org; *Perscom.*, 2011, 2012). With the website tag line *restore a town, transform a nation* and an informational video justifying the desire to “grow a new generation of leaders” given the ‘reality’ that with the highest aids induced death rate in the world, the “Swazi people could cease to exist by 2050” – my curiosity hardened into certainty. The fascinating collusion of past and present, of toxicity and new life drew me to the place.

BMS’s aim is to provide long-term “total care” to the children living there. As described to me by the director of childcare, one of the project’s pioneers who was “already working with orphans” was drawn to Bulembu by the thought of filling the old empty houses with children in need of homes. As opposed to what the director described as a ‘symptomatic approach’ to care, i.e. that of the NCP model, where one does not know what happens “when the children go home”, BMS’s focus is on “raising children” and ultimately fostering “the development of a new generation of leaders” through the provision of sustained, constant care, health services and education (*ibid*). The children, selected on the basis of need and ‘orphan status’ by the Department of Welfare, are housed in individual houses where they live with up to eight ‘siblings’ and an appointed house ‘auntie’ and where they are envisioned to become part of both “the global house of God” and “caring family that will prepare them for a bright future” (*ibid; perscom*). It is hoped that on completing their high school education at Bulembu Christian Academy (BCA) and having received basic vocational training, the Bulembu youths will be ready to leave the town and seek employment elsewhere.

Altogether, although a brief description of the work that BMS does, with its moralizing vision of providing care to Swaziland’s “quintessential humanitarian” young subjects, Bulembu can also be seen to be situated in the much broader project

of global humanitarianism or what Ticktin (2011) refers to as an “emergent regime of care” (Malkki, 1995, 1997 2011, Loc: 795; Ticktin, 2011; Sweis, 2011: 27; Fassin, 2011). More specifically, “where humanity is mobilized in a remarkable array of circumstances”, this particular developmental project is given its existential meaning through its Christian dimension. Uniting faith and economic development to nurture both body and spirit, Bulembu’s humanitarian quest to protect the lives of children, is further exemplary of the “the newly gained political support for faith” as an ordering process for charitable developmental work on a global scale (Hearn, 2003). As Ticktin and Feldman (2011: 25) assert, “whether or not one is a believer” the significance of faith based work “in international development can no longer be denied”. As such, the organisation’s goals situate it at the centre of current local and developmental conceptions of children, their sociopolitical value and how and where they should be cared for. In this way, although I have chosen a single, ‘island-like’ field site, reminiscent of early ethnographic accounts of bounded cultural worlds, Bulembu is inextricably linked to both the entire political, ideological and “experiential” space of the nation as well as to an “elsewhere”, to the broader political economy beyond its borders (Lefebvre, 1976).

1.4 Research aims

This thesis aims to highlight a pre-occupation with the ‘proper’ place and care of socially ‘displaced’ children and trace the material affects and effects of the ways in which individuals are attempting to make ‘new worlds’ for children in need of care. I pay particular attention to how organisational goals shape the qualitative experience of childhood for the young people who live there. More generally, I also offer a close examination of the motivations and experiences of Bulembu’s organisational staff working in different entrepreneurial sectors and particularly those employed in care-giving roles. My overall purpose for writing this ethnography then, is to draw out the tangible, yet unforeseen socio-moral consequences of the practices of care and compassion in contemporary Swaziland. Situating this study in the context of a broader global, particularly Christian philanthropic preoccupation with the project of ‘saving children’, this study therefore forms a contributory part of an emergent body of anthropological research that critically explores the logic and practice of ‘humanitarian government’ (Fassin, 2011).

1.5 Chapter outline

This thesis moves between various analytical frames each of which are integral to the constitution of the text as a whole. Chapter Two is made up of two parts, 'The Island' and 'The Mainland' and explores the "ideological dimensions space". I look at how the space of the children's village is practiced, made meaningful and constructed to mirror organisational intention. Centering on the recurrent theme of dislocation, Part One examines how Bulembu youth experience, imagine, claim and inhabit the spaces created for, around and by them (Henderson, 2009: 4). Part two moves beyond Bulembu's borders to surface the politics of place and its relationship to privilege through establishing governmental perspectives on the care and proper placement of children in need of care. Chapter Three then explores the 'micro politics' of compassion and "moral tangles" of the development project in its local form. I demonstrate how the organisational goal to 'grow kids in God's way' stirred up interpersonal relationships, altered feelings of belonging and produced an interesting set of new dislocations, for the child beneficiaries, their caregivers and many other BMS workers. Lastly, Chapter Four aims to assess the limits of a critique of humanitarian compassion and broaden my analytical frame to examine the politically-economically produced factors that have led to the emergence of an organisation such as this.

1.6 The literature

I have drawn on a broad range of literature in order to situate and make sense of my research findings. Much of the early anthropological research on Swaziland is comprised of structural-functional analyses conducted in the 1930s, 40s, and 60s by Hilda Kuper (1946, 1964, 1963) (who formed a close friendship, research and political advisory relationship with King Sobhuza II) on Swaziland's kinship, marriage, cultural practices and most notably on the intricate organisation of the Monarchy's traditionalist political system and the sociocultural impact of British colonialism (Macmillan, 1985; Cocks, 2000)¹². More recently there has been an increase in applied Medical Anthropological studies on Swaziland's HIV crisis and the possibilities of implementing medically integrative 'culturally appropriate' HIV interventions in an attempt to curb the epidemics widespread impact (Green, 1986;

¹² In the last decade of his life Bronislaw Malinowski also spent a significant period of time in Swaziland in the 1930s researching the impact of imperialism upon Africa's colonized peoples, research that was incorporated into his largely ignored work of *The Dynamics of Culture Change* (1945) (Cocks, 2000).

Knox, 2010). Correspondingly there has been a growth in governmental Multisectoral HIV/AIDS Strategic planning and UNAIDS/UNICEF policy and programming reports, all of which have been foundational to the statistical/demographic contextualisation of my research (NERCHA, 2009; UNICEF, 2008, 2010; UNAIDS, 2010). Yet, given the distinct lack of contemporary *ethnographically* oriented research that speaks directly to my field of interest, I have relied on much comparative literature based on largely child-centred studies conducted elsewhere in Africa and anthropological theory that speaks more generally to the conceptual issues surrounding extra-familial childcare and humanitarian interventionist ‘help’ in the developing world. This is made possible by the fact that although my chosen fieldsite stands as a small unit of study, the programme of care in implementation exists as a social interface emerging out of “a complex dialectic between the global and the local...the semiotic and the material” (Castaneda, 2002).

Responding to the call to examine children’s realities from a child-centred point of view and contribute to the previously “gross under-representation of children” in the social sciences, especially in anthropology, this study forms part of a research cohort focusing on researching and writing about the subjective and qualitative experiences of youth, children, and childhood in contemporary Southern Africa (Cheney, 2007: 12). In this regard, without directly referencing the seminal works that have deconstructed the essentialised status of ‘the child’ and normative understandings of ‘childhood’ through illuminating the historically contingent discursive practices that produce these politically-loaded conceptions, these ‘new childhood studies’ have inevitably informed both the conceptualisation and theoretical direction that this thesis takes (Aries, 1962 James, Jenks & Proust, 1998; Cheney, 2007).

Surfacing my young informants’ views on their own social worlds and paying attention to their vulnerabilities, their strengths and their various ways of ‘re-making’ life under difficult circumstances, this study further aims to counterbalance the proliferation of mostly quantitative writing about “disappearing, lost and stolen (African) childhoods” that have largely emerged in response to the widespread impact of the HIV epidemic on familial networks of care (Tarantola and Gruskin, 1998; Bellamy, 2004; Richter, Foster and Sherr, 2006; Cluver & Govender, 2007). As proponents of what Abebe and Aase (2007) describe as proponents of either a social

“resilience” or “rupture” thesis, much of this research narrowly revolves around a singular focus on exploring the impact that the epidemic is having on the *extended* family, with little attention paid to what UNICEF (2008) describes as ‘alternative care’ (Madhavan, 2004; Abebe & Aase 2007, Mathambo & Gibbs, 2009). Investigating the logic of practice and qualitative impact thereof of an intervention attempting to recreate ‘traditional’ Swazi families, a care intervention that stands against the backdrop and intersection of formal adoption, informal fosterage, familial extensions of care and institutionalism, my research hopes to blur these epistemological gaps and open up new opportunities for the study of rapidly shifting systems of family making in Southern Africa. Furthermore, while cognisant of the stark socially rupturing impact of the epidemic on families, this study follows the anthropological literature seeking to illuminate its complexity by writing against the one dimensional, often stereotypical “tragic imaginings” that so often embed narratives of childhoods in the context of the epidemic (Henderson, 2006; Meintjes & Giese, 2006: 408).

Yet, it is these very images that propel, “the philanthropic impulse to give” and form the moral basis of the prolific humanitarian project of ‘child saving’ (Hart, 2002). With these notions firmly embedded in BMS’s vision I have also drawn on an emergent body of literature that emphasises the transnational scope and salience of the humanitarianism and its particular, religious focus on ‘saving’ and sponsoring the world’s most vulnerable children, in order to frame and theorise my own research findings (Pandolfi, 2003; Bornstein, 2005; Redfield, 2005; Hart, 2006; Ticktin & Feldman, 2010; Malkki, 2010; Fassin, 2011; Sweis, 2011). These studies seek to highlight the politics of compassion by exploring the affective role that humanitarian organisations play in the everyday lives of their beneficiaries (Malkki, 2010; Sweis, 2011: 28). I have found Lisa Malkki’s (1995, 2011: loc, 205, 805) work particularly useful in thinking through both the ‘affective’ (yet simultaneously depoliticising) work done by various representations of the figure of the child that circulate in the global mediascape and propel interventionist action (i.e. as symbols of world harmony, as sufferers, as seers of truth and as embodiments of peace and futurity). Kristen Cheney in her recent child-participatory monograph *Pillars of our Nation* (2007) on child citizenship and post conflict nation-building in Uganda, utilises the register of the child as a hopeful embodiment of a peaceful future as a starting point

for her analysis. Of particular relevance to my research, Cheney (2007: 2) illustrates the multiple ways in which concepts of nationhood and childhood intersect and how children, without memory of Uganda's violent past and as potential purveyors of a peaceful future are being co-opted as discursive objects in relation to the nation state and as the quintessential moral 'site' of humanitarian intervention.

However, there is very little anthropological research that focuses specifically on a Christian based humanitarian approach. This epistemological gap is curious given the renewal of religious expression and a proliferation of churches stepping into to fill the retreating welfare role of the state, particularly in many African countries (Harcourt, 2003; Bornstein, 2005; Piot, 2010: 2; Fassin, 2011: loc, 5255)¹³. The transnational reach of faith based humanitarian aid through the work of NGOS and the increasing political economic importance of religious NGOS in Africa further complicate the matter. Religious ideas inform and intersect with the moral dynamics of economic development. This lack of attention is, as Joel Robbins (2007: 5) suggests, part of a much broader failure for an anthropology of Christianity to develop. Erica Bornstein's *The Spirit of Development* (2005) is one of the few ethnographic texts that takes seriously the role of faith in economic development through exploring the practices of two Protestant NGOS in Zimbabwe. Her monograph, focusing on the ways in which in contexts of severe socioeconomic constraint, or where as Piot (2010) states the future is uncertain, faith "becomes the conceptual fuel for change" and how the practices of giving impact on local lives, has therefore been foundational to my understanding of BMS's own project with faith as an ordering principle. Although I wish to make no claims of contributing to the now growing project of a new anthropology of Christianity, I hope to respond to Bornstein's (2005: 3) (and others) call to expand the limited scope of research that acknowledges the "contemporary importance of faith" of people's lives and its integral role in development" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 14 cited by Piot, 2010: 2). In turn, following Piot, I hope that altogether my research can contribute to the emergent anthropological theoretical project of analysing the effects of what Piot (2010) and Fassin (2011) describe as new forms of global humanitarian governance, from vertical to horizontal, biopolitical governance

¹³ Kindle referencing style.

through the proliferation of non state organizations attempting to forge new futures and in turn, deciding who to support and who to neglect.

1.7 Research methods & Ethical considerations

The research that informed this thesis was undertaken over a period of two months, between December 2011 and January 2012. I returned to Swaziland in June 2012 for a week to revisit my fieldsite, present my findings (and make sure they were understood) to the director and conduct follow-up research. After persistent communication with Bulembu's director of childcare, including a visit to propose my research and discuss its ethical implications months before I was to begin, I managed to gain permission to live and work in Bulembu. I also spent a significant part of my research time outside of Bulembu, visiting other residential care programmes and conducting informal interviews with Swazi nationals that were involved in child-care or who had adopted children from Bulembu. My overall methodological goal was to gain as many perspectives on the subject of alternative childcare in Swaziland as possible.

Following critiques about the need to "locate the missing child" in anthropological writing, I largely chose to utilise a child-centred, participant observation research approach, with a commitment to paying attention to the ways children act, not just as passive objects of enquiry "but as (competent) social agents in their own right" (James et al., 1998; Cheney, 2007; Christensen & James, 2009; Tisdall, Davis & Gallagher, 2009). The attempt to gauge my young informants viewpoints did not however go hand in hand with a facile assertion or rather as David Lancy (2011:2) critiques "promotion" of children's agency. Rather, following Laura Ahearn (2001) I have found it more useful to think of agency in relation to the lives of the young people in this study as the "constrained capacity" to act. Aware of the multiple methodological and "ethical quandaries" involved in conducting research with children throughout the research process, my primary concern was to carefully create spaces for meaningful child-led, participatory communication between my young informants and myself (Morrow & Richards, 1996: 97; Hirshfeld, 2002: 1-2; Christensen & James, 2006; Tisdall et al, 2009). As such, as outlined below, the methods I utilised were designed to invite as much initiation on the part of my young informants as possible. However, aware of the need not to draw too stark a

methodological distinction between working with children and adults I did not limit my investigation to working with children only (Tisdall et al, 2009:17). This was also due to the fact that although child-centred research emphasises a departure from the channeling of children's views via adult proxies (Cheney, 2007: 18) adults are invariably involved in children's lives, often have as important/nuanced insights into their experiences and indeed occupy the same social world.

I worked closely with and spent much time engaging with BMS's managerial staff, social workers and house-aunties in order to gain in-depth insight into the logic and experience of the practices that BMS undertakes and gauge their understanding of the efficacy of organisational intentionality. Aside from the time spent with the social workers and house-aunties daily, these engagements primarily involved conducting multiple informal, semi-structured interviews with each of these individuals. I also organised to facilitate two, one hour long focus groups with a group of ten to twelve willing house aunties in order to open up a dialogical space to gauge more fully their experiences of caregiving, the challenges they faced, the rewards they felt and their personal understandings of 'ideal' forms of extra-familial childcare. The focus groups were particularly effective for complimenting and concretising the data collected on an individual basis.

I was granted permission to work separately with two households in *Duduzi* village; house A and B. House A housed five girls and House B, six boys, all between the ages of seven and twelve. I spent two weeks working with each house. I also conducted a series of semi structured, extended interviews with five teenagers, three girls and two boys that lived in the older boys and girls homes. Although my time and as well as the places that I could take or be taken to by my young informants was severely limited by strict organisational rules, I still managed to employ a variety of flexible/exploratory 'child-centred' research techniques and gain a significant amount of insight into their individual lives and the ways they made sense of their experiences (Grieg & Taylor, 1999: 43). Much of my data was also drawn from a persistent flow of inquisitive conversation and participation in my young participants daily tasks. For the sake of comparison and continuity I utilised the same methods with both sample groups. Throughout, I enabled my participants to guide the research as much as they could and set the pace and length of the activities we undertook. For this reason,

including my acknowledgement of the fact that I could never expect how my young participants would respond to the tasks I intended to put forward, my methods evolved continuously.

The set activities included, thematic and non-thematic drawing (for example of their homes and their families), storytelling (including recordings of their ‘arrival narratives’), flashcards and mapping. Both the drawing and flash cards (of which contained images relevant to their lives) worked to overcome any linguistic limitations and prompt detailed oral information concerning their interpretations of what they drew and saw (Young and Barret; 2001). As revealed in Chapter Two, I asked my young participants to take me on a walking tour of the town, pointing out all the places they knew and spent their time, what places they liked most and felt safe and where they felt unsafe and later record these on a map of Bulembu (Reynolds, 1989). The mapping was particularly useful for revealing their perceptions of and use of space.

Despite the fact that there have been recent efforts to reverse and revise these assumptions, the ethical dilemmas involved in working with children (and indeed adults) are still an inherently “messy” and “contested”, and need to be approached with a great deal of awareness and sensitivity as well as continually being re-negotiated throughout the research process (Tisdall et al 2009: 11). In alignment with the Anthropological Association’s ethical guidelines, verbal consent was negotiated at the beginning of the research process with each of the individuals I was to work with. In each case I stipulated the aims of the research and discussed issues of identity protection and personal pseudonym usage. The question of consent was further kept a live process throughout the research process. Regarding organisational identity, I chose to not change its name given its unique distinguishing features that would make it identifiable irrespective of pseudonym use. Yet, I have agreed with the DCC that I will conceal organisational identification in the case of publication. I have also asked that the DCC disseminate my final draft to BMS staff and send it back with feedback prior to potential publication.

Aware of the difficulties of gaining informed consent from children, an issue compacted by the staff’s role of ‘assigning’ me a group of children to work with and

stipulating (at least most times) who I could and could not speak to, I chose to gain verbal consent with my young participants each time we worked together. Following Tisdall *et al.* (2009:17) I explained and make sure they understood why I was doing the research and what I hoped the outcomes would be. I was particularly sensitive to the circumstances in which these conversations took place, making sure they did not feel coaxed into the process and were not being influenced by peers and guardians. It was helpful to think of the notion of ‘assent’ vs. ‘consent’, implying that the negotiation of children’s participation was a process, sensitively navigated over time in the context of verbal communication and relationship building. I also made sure they knew that I was leaving but that I would visit them and send them letters as often as possible. I was also very careful not to speak to their caregivers about them, aware that what I saw as in their best interests was not always the case (Tisdall, 2009: 19). Furthermore, Parson (2005:74) points to the additional ethical and methodological issues which may arise in circumstances of multiple and cumulative bereavements. In acknowledgement, I allowed my informants to set the pace of the discussion and guide what questions were asked, receiving and prompting only what is offered (Henderson, 2005:88). In addition, I attempted to create contexts in which they felt comfortable to open up about more sensitive issues as well as provide spaces for their silence (*ibid*). So, at the same time I made sure that I did not stop them from speaking or undermine their ability to speak about ‘hard subjects’ (Henderson, 2005: 88). Photos were taken consensually. I printed out copies for my young informants and made sure no personally identifying photos were used in this document. Lastly, I organised a children’s participatory performance for all the Bulembu children in August 2012 as way of displaying my immense gratitude to allowing me to be a part of their lives.

Chapter Two: upon the hill of hope



Entering Bulembu through the security gate (Author, 18/12/2012)

The Island becomes the emblematic place where there can be perceived originary myths and the concurrent forces that generate them... once thought of this way, the island becomes the vital space of creative difference and repetition – a figurative geography of singularity (Buchanan & Lambert citing Gilles Deleuze, 2006: 217)

Part I: 'The Island'

2.1 Arriving

After months of struggling to gain access to the fieldsite, I finally found myself preparing to go and live in Bulembu for six weeks. Aside from the usual daily essentials, a 'fieldwork tool kit' and modest clothing, I packed three medical masks that my mother had bought me "for sleeping with". I never used them, because no one did. In fact, irrespective of the enormous 'waste mountain' in the centre of town and the green stone streets reminding us of its unsubtle and persistent presence, no one spoke about asbestos. And if it did come up, it was wryly shrugged off at dinner table conversations as nothing to worry about - just part of the place's past, washed away after years of high rainfall or swept elsewhere with the wind. As such the reader will find too that the question of asbestos remains buried beneath the stories that I have told, hanging in the air like the ghost of my unanswered questions. I was repeatedly told that this was God's place and that the inhabitants in their mission to "serve God and The Kingdom" had been "called" to work here in this corner of the kingdom (interview with the Director of Childcare, 2011; Laterza, 2012: 167)¹⁴. Daphne, an elderly house manager I met one day described to me how the town had been cleansed

¹⁴ In another conversation the director expressed that if I went to all the Christian children's homes in the country of which there are many, I would find the same situation, that the people who had set them up or were working there, had all received some form of a calling in the form of a dream or a vision,

of its history since the arrival of the Ministry in 2006. According to her, God had sent three signs of purification; a fire that encircled Bulembu fueled by violent gusts of wind and later heavy rains that resulted in a flood. She told me about a dream that she had had in which she was hovering above the Bulembu hills and could see the letters G-O-D written on the ground below. In describing to me Bulembu's 'rebirth', with echoes of Ernst Bloch's definition of Utopia as the principle of hope, the Director of Childcare likened the town to the "garden of Eden", a place where children with "no hope" could be "rescued", 'grow' and be given an opportunity. Expanding on this messianic mission, the director added:

"I imagine that one day this whole town will be a children's town. I imagine every space to be occupied by children, that there will be playgrounds everywhere and the kids can just go around picking fruit. It's a place of hope. Bulembu helps children be loved be safe and create a future for them" (*perscom.*, 2011).

After travelling for forty minutes to an hour on rough road (depending on the weather the day before) and after passing through the security gate and navigating another almost un-drivable stretch of road, ones arrival at 'God's Place' is made palpable by a large wooden cross and psalm number painted on a building in the dairy farm field. Psalm 100:3-5 reads:

Know that the LORD, he *is* God;
It *is* He who has made us and not we ourselves;
We *are* His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Whereas Bulembu was only my home for the six weeks that I undertook my fieldwork, a period of time that I could occasionally break up by driving back to Mbabane, it was the children's permanent and 'proper' home. It was His land dedicated to them - their pasture to play in.

This chapter is divided into two parts. From the perspective that thought precedes or rather invents concrete form, Part I, explores the spatial dimensions of Bulembu's vision (McDonough, 2009: 105). Taking the reader on a 'walking' tour of the town I introduce the slow materialization of the Mission's utopia, of rebuilding a town and contributing to the restoration of the 'tattered' social fabric of a nation under severe socio-economic strain. Reflecting on the repeatedly drawn connection between culture, location and inculcation, I begin to unravel the importance of place in relation to BMS's understandings of the appropriate care of children. Subsequently, drawing on philosophical and anthropological meditations of space and place, I use ethnographic data to animate the ways in which the space is practiced, how it facilitates everyday experience and creates both "conditions of possibility" and constraint for the people who live there (de Certeau, 1988: 92). Here, with reference to my young informants' 'spatial narratives', their reflections on arrival and living in Bulembu, and their maps of the town, the notion of Bulembu as both home as well as an isolated, island-like place dislocated from home and the rest of Swaziland surfaces strongly (de Certeau, 1988: 117; Henderson, 2009: 5). In Part Two, extending this notion of dislocation and drawing on an interview that I undertook with the CEO of Swaziland's National Emergency Council on HIV and AIDS (NERCHA), I move from the 'Island' to the 'Mainland' to expand on the emergent politics of place and its relationship to privilege through establishing the government's perspective on the care and the 'proper' placement of 'parentless' children.

2.2 Tours

During my first week of fieldwork I was given a town tour. Our movement through the town's well-established routes was foundational in shaping my understanding of how Bulembu 'worked', both in terms of its geographical layout and the spatial rules and the organisational logic of practice that accompanied this layout. This tour, led by Rene¹⁵, one of the childcare managers, also came to locate my estranged emplacement in the town through delineating my careful and often meticulously managed movements through space. However, it was not my only tour. During the course of my fieldwork I was given various tours, guided by individuals with very particular ways of seeing, or in de Certeau's terms, 'reading' the place. In conjunction with my own way finding, a constant sensory engagement with and navigation of the known

¹⁵ Pseudonyms are used throughout

and the unknown, these tours enabled me to grasp the different ways that the town's inhabitants inhabited Bulembu and the various modalities of sociality that emerged out of its clear demarcation (Ross, 2010). Through reflecting on multiple guided encounters, the tour that I map in this section attempts to orient the reader to the multifaceted dimensions of space and traces its transformation from a crumbling 'ghost town' into a fully functioning project oriented around the holistic care of the 'nation's children in need'.

Navigating the potholed streets that wind through town in her navy blue Honda CRV, Rene explained the different functions of the buildings to me. Explaining that Bulembu is built on the notion of self-sustainability she pointed out the clearly labeled income generating businesses that had recently been set up; the bakery, the water plant, the honey-bottling factory and the country lodge. She gestured towards the sawmill over the hill near the edge of town and explained that the mill generated the majority of Bulembu's jobs (Laterza, 2012). She pointedly explained that everyone that lived in the town worked for the ministry and that their housing was conditional on their employment. She added, and I duly noted, "If any one fails to comply with the rules, they will be asked to leave". She reasoned that this was in order to protect the children, "some of who have come from very unsafe homes". The workers' houses are clustered on the one side of the town on the opposite hill to the managerial staff homes. Although Rene did not mention it, these single roomed houses built in the 1960s for the mine workers have no access to the electricity that light up the rest of the town. At nighttime the workers' lodgings are a belt of smoke filled darkness, a signifier of Bulembu's persistent social stratification. Behind the workers' houses are three rows of refurbished and electrically lit multi-coloured children's houses. This section of children's homes is called *Duduzi* Village, often referred to as The Hill of Hope. These blue, green, brown and red "smartie box"¹⁶ houses have five rooms: two bedrooms, a living/eating area, a bathroom and a separate room for the house aunties. The children of *Duduzi* eat three meals a day in a central dining hall area where they sit at tables according to their house numbers. After breakfast and before supper, following their respective house aunties the children make their way along well-trodden dirt paths to and from school each weekday. The second zone of children's

¹⁶ The colourful children's houses were often referred to as smartie boxes by BMS staff. See Appendix A.

houses is on the opposite side of town in an area called Precimon. The Precimon area also holds the two older boys and older girls houses, where the 'sixteen and up's' live. We drove past the church, the primary and high schools, the clinic and the Welcome Centre. Rene explained that the children are initially housed in the Welcome Centre, in order to adapt to the new environment and be medically, mentally and emotionally 'screened' before their placement into permanent homes and school.

Although it was being transformed into Bulembu Christian Academy High School during my fieldwork, the Welcome Centre figured prominently in the children's 'arrival narratives'¹⁷. In both my sample groups, the children had all described it as part of their first memory of Bulembu: the place that they had arrived to in the middle of the night, the place that they had bathed and been fed their first "Italian" meal and the place that they made their first friends that later became their new families away from home. Rene expressed that that the importance of the Welcome Centre was to enable them to adjust to their new environment and to get to know them enough in order to "group them into a new family".

Lastly, we approached the baby home at the 'top of the town', a green corrugated iron building on *Windsor Park Street*. The baby home houses babies under the age of three that have been brought to Bulembu through the Department of Social Welfare or the Mbabane government hospital. According to Rene, most of these babies' mothers had passed away in childbirth or the babies had been abandoned with no traceable ties to their families. During my time in Bulembu I came to learn a lot about the baby home and its centrality to the BMS project. Up until 2009 *Bulembu Babies* had been called *ABC Ministries (Abandoned Babies for Christ)* and was run by Robyn Richter. Robyn had moved ABC to Bulembu from Big Bend in 2005 after an invitation to join organisations that had already been set up there (i.e. *The Light House & Jacaranda House* for girls) to be a part of a wider 'orphan community'. Rene explained that when BMS had bought up the town in 2006 they wanted to consolidate the different initiatives under the single BMS 'banner'. ABC was one of the last organisations to 'merge' with BMS. Since the merge BMS had stopped all the adoptions, both national

¹⁷ I was told that at the time BMS were not taking in anymore children as for the time being, particularly given the Canadian Philanthropist's retraction of funding, had reached their capacity. [Available online]: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/swaziland-project-collapses-in-clash-between-canadian-ambitions-and-local-priorities/article2115074/page1>

and international that Robyn used to process. According to Robyn prior to the national closures of international adoptions in February 2010 and BMS's decision to 'cancel out' adoptions, ABC stood out as one of Swaziland's "adoption hotspots".

BMS's decision to end all adoptions from the baby home can be seen to be fundamental to their 'cultural' vision of childcare and concurrently, the way in which social life is structured in the village. Here I would like to consider how the organisation's existence, logic of practice and spatial layout is inextricably linked to the manifestation of a certain kind of rationality around the 'proper' care of Swazi children.

2.3 Culture keeping

As briefly outlined in the introduction, BMS's core vision is to create a permanent home environment for OVCs from across the country that mimics as naturally as possible the home life of a 'traditional' Swazi family. In interviews with Rene and Justine (a BMS social worker) I was repeatedly told that although the children are occasionally taken on home visits, depending on the severity of their familial situation, the organisation encourages the older children to view Bulembu as their "home until they are ready to be independent". With the babies Rene expressed that when they start asking questions, they are told, "We are their family and this is their home..."

Practically, this vision of creating a home away from home and as Justine put it, a "family within a family" manifests in the construction of individual houses as opposed to building a large and quintessentially impersonal orphanage. Furthermore, the notion of 'traditional' is translated into familial size, i.e. the structuring of households with up to six children and a single house auntie. Although the households were initially comprised of boys and girls, I was told in hushed tones by another social worker, Thobile, that "kids are naughty..." and that after a while of 'you know what', management was forced to gender segregate the homes. The stark absence of any fatherly figures within these households was acknowledged as a necessary 'pity'. Yet, overtime I learnt that the head of the household was indeed male; the omnipresent-absence of Jesus Christ was woven into every aspect of home life. The responsibility of making (a Christ-conscious) home, creating a "sense of family

identity”, as it was described in the ‘mother’s training workshop’, standing in as a ‘cultural’ reminder of lives lived elsewhere and striking the delicate balance between providing discipline and loving encouragement, all rested on the house aunties. On reaching the age of three or four the toddlers from *Bulembu Babies* are transferred into these households. Justine explained that the babies help facilitate this kind of “family cohesion that can be found in natural families”.

However, this notion of making home extends beyond creating a ‘homely’ environment and an emblematic sense of familial and faith-based singularity but is inextricably linked to Bulembu’s location within the borders of the nation. I asked Justine if “family cohesion” was the only reason for barring adoptions from *Bulembu Babies* and she responded:

“No, BMS prefers the children to stay with families and keep the kids in the country because they are Swazis. We have cultural reasons for it. Kids should be able to be taken care of in their country. I strongly believe in taking care of kids in their own country. I think it is in their best interests. It’s their culture... If there are adoptions they should be national. But here we believe that keeping them in this family environment is best”.

Similarly, when I asked the director of childcare the same question he argued that “keeping” the babies in the town is a way of facilitating the sustainability of the programme, so that they can track their growth and see them move from baby home to household and finally to the senior homes. In contrast to Robyn’s perspective, he also argued and took issue with the fact that “very few Swazi people were interested in adopting children and that most of the adoptive parents were “expats”. He reiterated that Bulembu’s goal was to “raise the leaders of the nation” and henceforth not *remove* them from the nation.

In these perspectives my informants’ emphasis on the necessity of cultural preservation through ensuring that children grow up within the country’s borders and within an extended familial-like structure is important in a number of ways. Their perspectives exemplify the centrality of culture and by implication, that of place, both the geographic and symbolic importance of the nation as a space in which to

‘properly’ raise children. Within these perspectives, *where* and *with whom* a child is raised is highlighted as the primary ‘ingredients’ of enculturation. The notion that a child ‘naturally’ belongs to the nation state, that a child must be bound by territory in order to belong to a nation, irrespective of birth or language, and that adult actors must actively engage to ensure this situatedness, surfaces strongly in these perspectives. This preoccupation with place further echoes the reasons that the Swazi Prime Minister gave on announcing the government’s decision to place a ban on intercountry adoption - a perspective that Londiwe, one of my Mbabane informants was strongly in support of, as to her it meant the “DPM was trying to put custom back into Swaziland”.

These convictions about the importance of “growing” children within the boundaries of the nation state further reflects much broader anxieties surrounding cultural loss, dislocation from place of birth and concurrently the appropriate placement of socially ‘displaced’ children. As Kristen Cheney (2007) demonstrates in her monograph *Pillars of the Nation* these articulations further speak to global development languages that advocate certain conceptions of children and their cultural and political worth. In this book she traces the inextricable linkage between childhood and nationhood and argues that Ugandan children have come to figure as key nation-building tropes and increasingly “co-opted as discursive objects in relation to a nation state attempting to rebuild itself after political upheaval” (Cheney, 2007: 11; Malkki, 2012). Lisa Malkki (2012: 58) observes a similar phenomenon in her analysis of the central role that children play in the global articulation of humanity. She identifies numerous discursive roles that children commonly play, which aside from the most obvious, as exemplars of human goodness, includes ‘role five’; as embodiments of the future.

The observations above point to a similar phenomenon taking place in Swaziland, where in a country that prides itself on the “extraordinary resilience” of its culture and in the context of a rapidly declining socioeconomically active population, Swazi children are increasingly being construed as ‘constructed as and ‘clutched’ to as ‘leaders of tomorrow’, as the last beacon of hope for a culturally contingent and prosperous future (Nyekos, 1982). In line with research that suggests that children have long served as the expressions for a variety of governing projects, it appears that

in this instance, the empty, immaterial, malleable and fundamentally coercive thing of culture is being strategically 'filled' in an attempt to define the contours and limits of child citizenship.

2. 4 Houses and homes

Against the backdrop of BMS's proclaimed goals of remaking a home for children in need that will both afford them a positive future and protect their Swazi identity and the centrality of place in this process, this section documents the ways my young informants conceptualise home, occupy and attribute meaning to space and have come to experience everyday life in Bulembu (Henderson, 2009:4). This section then importantly explores the convergence of the wills and beliefs of adult actants in their attempts to remake the lifeworlds of young people disrupted by the effects of poverty and disease and my young informants own experiences of inhabiting these carefully constructed places.

It was the week before Christmas when I was first introduced to the girls in house A. Thobile walked me along the neat row of children's houses at the top of the village. There were patches of grass between each house and a washing line strung across the lawns. Some of the house aunties had planted flowers or vegetables outside their doors and in front of each house were multiple pairs of different sized shoes. We knocked and were welcomed into the living room by auntie Nothando. Stuck to the wall were the 'house rules', awards that the girls had won at the end of the year and a hand written sign that had the words, " A happy clean house" on it. Pinned to auntie Nothando's door was a child's drawing of a heart, a flower and a cross and had the words "I love you" written on it. Auntie Nothando called the five girls out from their room to meet me.

Zindie was chewing on a piece of hard plastic, I remember that every time I saw her she was chewing on something different, an unripe peach, the top of a pen, a lollipop stick, even when I went back to visit four months later she gave me a hug and turned her head so as not to jab me with the pencil she was chewing on. Zindie is 10, bright eyed and on first meeting, shy, but given half the chance is extremely boisterous and often emotionally manipulative. Amanda, the eldest of the five girls told me that Zindie likes to pretend that she is sad and then "when you ask her what's wrong she

laughs in your face”. Irrespective of her playful, carefree nature, Zindie’s situation prior to her arrival at Bulembu was particularly difficult. Where, as Veena Das (cited by Ross, 2010: 71) suggests “pain is distributed unequally in populations” and in a country burdened by deep-seated gender inequality, it is not an imaginative leap to suggest that ‘pain’ in the form of neglect and sexual abuse largely ‘falls’ on young girls. According to her Social Welfare report, Zindie is (definitionally) a ‘double orphan’. Her father had passed away and her mother had left soon after, her mortality status unknown. Zindie went to live with her maternal grandmother in a homestead near Hawane (an area about 20kms south of Pigs Peak). Her case was reported to Social Welfare and subsequently to Bulembu when her uncle allegedly raped her. According to Justine, her grandmother had initially refused to report the case because her uncle was the family’s only breadwinner and report would mean arrest. Justine said that since then, a situation that is not uncommon in Swaziland, Zindie and her grandmother had become increasingly estranged.

Thandie is nine and extremely shy. She giggled a lot and when she spoke it was often hard to make out what she was saying because her words would be lost in mumbles. Justine had said that this was probably a coping mechanism used to cover up her sadness. Thandie was also a double orphan. Her father had passed away and her mother’s whereabouts were unknown. Before arriving in Bulembu, she and her brother, Hloni (living in house B) were living with their paternal grandfather. Social welfare had intervened when they heard of the emotional abuse and neglect they were facing. Busi who was the youngest of the girls, age seven had come from a similar set of circumstances. Busi and her brother Sifiso who lived in house four had arrived in Bulembu in 2008. Busi had burn scars on her face and her head. According to her welfare report she and her brother had been living with their maternal grandmother because their mother was mentally unstable. Their father’s mortality status was unknown. Busi was the quietest of the girls and often smiled shyly and looked away when she was spoken to. She seemed to be a mediator amongst the girls; she avoided conflict by not taking sides and keeping to herself.

Nandi and Amanda are the eldest of the girls, and the most vocal. Nandi had no birth certificate and when asking her age she pointedly told me, “I am ten or eleven or twelve”. She is also a double orphan and prior to arriving in Bulembu she was living

with her maternal aunt. She comes from a large yet impoverished family and her aunt claimed that she did not have the resources to take care of her. Similarly, Amanda, aged thirteen and her brother Khosi, aged ten, also living in house four came from a large and according to Justine, “very caring family”. Their parents had both passed away and their grandparents were unable to take care of them. Amanda is bright and her meticulous work ethic seemed to have been noticed as when I returned for a visit and she had skipped an entire grade.

The five boys I worked with during my time in Bulembu lived in house B; they are all between the ages nine to eleven. As mentioned above, three of them are brothers to the girls in house A. Khosi, Amanda’s brother and Sifiso, Busi’s brother were both 11 at the time of my research. In contrast to his sister, Sifiso is a loud, confident, troublemaker and was extremely popular amongst both the girls and boys of his age. Hloni, Thandie’s brother and Xolani are both extremely well spoken and polite and were the eldest of the boys, aged twelve and thirteen respectively. Xolani is not categorically an ‘orphan’. He was relocated to Bulembu when the SWD found that his father was an abusive alcoholic that would leave Jeremy home alone without access for food for days at a time.

Each with their highly distinct personalities and life experiences it seems arbitrary and somewhat coldly technical to use anthropological theory to widen the gap between the fluid possibilities of daily life and its deliberate documentation. However, where theory is built upon generality, where we have learnt to fit theory to context and not vice a versa and where anthropological engagements with social suffering, or what Arthur Kleinman (2000) refers to as ‘the violences of everyday life’ have a long history, it is possible that circumstantial commonalities exist between the lives my young informants. Not least because of their shared and bracketed belonging to the technocratic category of OVC, a label that essentially paved the way for their ‘rescue’, but because of what brought them here, what led to their ‘vulnerability’ in the first place. With their histories hidden from their house aunties and filed away in a cabinet in the main offices, and their individual stories of arrival carried away with the chaotic flux of everyday life, forgotten and filled in by various individuals it was easy to forget the past that bound them together. But anthropology doesn’t allow us to forget. So to utilise a political economy perspective to be cognisant of the

watch TV and ride bicycles and would eat what we wanted. That we would eat fish and rice. We don't eat what we want, they tricked us".

My young informants' spoke candidly about why they thought they were here. On asking, the answers ranged from "because I have no parents" to "because I could not go to school at home". Xolani's understanding expressed a longing for home, and a subtle sense of dislocated belonging yet simultaneous acceptance of his relocation. He offered,

"Before I came I was at my really home in Hawane. But first I go and fetch the cows and put them in the kraal. I felt proud of my cows. They did not tell me lies. They told me that Bulembu was for children that were not learning. I was learning but the money was not enough".

Although, all of the children's recollections capture the hardships of extreme poverty and the lacks and losses that led to their removal, Khosi's were particularly poignant. He had said:

"I was living in Ezulweni with Amanda and my granny. I had chicken pox and my mother was about to die. And I sat for sometime and I found her dead. And they covered her. I could not go to school. We ate soft porridge with no sugar before we went to bed".

Even though my young informants showed a great sense of adaptability and were visibly content with life in Bulembu, the arrival narratives, in conjunction with conversations we had had about family, the concept of home and the emotive distinctions between a house and home, revealed the children's ambiguous understandings of Bulembu as home. As opposed to organisational desires to mimic a family environment, for Bulembu to be and become the children's permanent home, the children in my sample group, both older and younger largely saw it a kind of liminal space. Zindie's arrival narrative and definition of a house vs. a home illustrates this conception. Zindie spoke of arriving at Bulembu, of feeling alone and afraid, and then of finding her friends and feeling happier, of being at the Welcome Centre and then moving to *Duduzi*. She punctuated each event with the words "and

we sat for long, long days”. On asking if she was still sitting for “long days”, she said, nodded. I asked her what she meant by this. She responded with a question “Who do we ask if we want to go home?” This sense of impermanence, of waiting for something to change was heightened by the young girls’ repeated recollection of their first house auntie, Dumsile and how they had been upset when she had left. The director mentioned that the high staff turnover, accompanied by the difficulty of ‘finding mothers’ were two of Bulembu’s key concerns. I worried that their house auntie would leave soon too, as she often spoke of her life elsewhere, her boyfriend in the South and her desire for a better paying job.

Moreover, the statement “a house is a place where you sleep and a home is where you are born. A home is where your mother is” was Zindie’s answer to my question about if there was any distinction. Accordingly then, her house was here in Bulembu, the house she drew in her family portrait but her home was somewhere else. It was not necessary Hawane, where her social welfare report said she was from. It was where her mother was, a place that she and no one knew. Amanda reiterated this stark absence of home. Walking down the path that connected the houses in *Duduzi* Amada had said to me “I am going to pretend that I am at home for a day. I never go”. I asked her when she will go and she responded, “They take you home when you finish school”. In the ‘Dreams and Wishes’ book that I made for the girls in house three and asked them to write down their dreams and wishes in the morning on days that they remembered to, Amanda repeatedly wrote of the dreams she had of “Going for a visit home” or “seeing her mum and dad”, the night before.

The disjuncture between family and home in the family portraits that they drew further emphasised the distinctions the children made between Bulembu and their original homes. When asked to draw their families, all my child informants except for Zindie and Busi drew their family members accompanied by a drawing of a house. Asking them to explain they each pointed out that the drawing depicted their ‘other’ homes, or their ‘homesteads’, the places as Zindie had described, where they were born. My young informants repeatedly told me that their lives were “good” in Bulembu, particularly in the letters I asked them to write me on the topic. For example, Xolani eloquently wrote:

“Our lives in Bulembu is better than our really home, because we can speak English now. There are some rules at school or at home, they are important because they keep us safe. In Bulembu we have two swimming pools at lodge and at Chinda. It is good at Bulembu because of the school. Each and every day we eat a breakfast, break, lunch and supper. The tailyen (Italian) make people grow very fast”.

Yet, although my informants’ perceptions of Bulembu were largely positive, the conversations reflect a constant presence of home, as an unattainable ‘elsewhere’, beyond the boundaries of Bulembu. I was continuously reminded of the children’s “really home” versus their Bulembu home, their “real family” versus their Bulembu families. This notion of home as different to what the organisation had hoped and this sense of being caught somewhere ‘in between’, as demonstrated below, was compounded by my older informants.

2.5 Bounded lifeworlds

As part of the ‘Bulembu timeline’ that I was conducting, I organised to undertake a series of interviews with a selection of older girls and boys on their life histories and experiences of life in Bulembu. I came to learn so much about teenage life in Bulembu through my very first encounter with Marissa. Marissa and I met in the last week of the school holiday at the older girl’s house in Precimon on *Winston Churchill* Street. I walked into the living room, painted bright pink and decorated with colourful scatter cushions and a fluffy carpet. Some of the girls were lying on their stomachs glued to the television watching *High School Musical*. The other girls, not completely captivated by Zach Ephron’s smiling face and shiny hair were sitting on the sofa reading magazines. They glanced up disinterestedly at me, probably thinking I was another volunteer here to teach them something or other, run a youth group or do more medical ‘work ups’. Feeling like a fish out of water in clearly demarcated home turf, I was possibly projecting. But sixteen-year-old Marissa rescued me; she bounced into the living room after being called by the social worker, and enthusiastically introduced herself. Sensing my nervousness, she told me not to worry about “the other girls”, she said “they’re just nervous because our marks come out tomorrow”. She led me to a quiet spot in the kitchen. I asked her if she was also nervous and she confidently said, “no, I know I will go to form four” (Grade 11). Marissa was a

pseudonym. She picked it because she said if she could “go back” and choose a name for herself it would be “Marissa Kate Pathway”. She told me that Marissa Pathway was a character from a book she was reading and her surname was also ‘Pathway’ except in SiSwati. Marissa and I spoke about many things. We digressed considerably from the carefully constructed questions I had prepared, delving into the intimate details of her childhood, some of her teenage fantasies and her life dreams. In many ways the tragic set of circumstances that led to Marissa’s arrival in Bulembu were common to the other young people there, and familiar in the sense that such ‘stories’ figured prominently in the prolific qualitative literature focusing on young people’s experiences of AIDS related orphaning that I had read. Marissa spoke candidly about the death of her father and her tenuous relationship with her mother and her mother’s lover. She expressed anger at her mother and told me that she believes that “she [her mother] is the one that killed [her] daddy in 2005”. She told me that when he was sick, “dying from, I’m not going to tell you but you obviously know what”, I nodded, she said “yeah that”, her mum left with another man and she and her brothers “had to take care of him until he passed away”. She said, “We had to bath him and make sure he had food so he could take medication and there was not even enough food in the house so we had to go from door to door asking for mealie meal”. She told me that she still holds a grudge against her mother and that her mother said to her the last time she was home, “it seems like I don’t have a daughter anymore”. She answered, “I am not your daughter because you ran away from me”.

Marissa’s viewed her experiences of loss and hardship pragmatically. She said, “sooner or later I will get over it” and she brushed aside my queries of whether we should talk about less difficult things. Instead she saw these events as foundational in shaping where she was today. She repeatedly expressed in language that mirrored organisational rhetoric that she was “lucky to be here” and that Bulembu allowed her to pursue her dreams through giving her opportunities she would not else have had. She said; “life is just life, it’s not always fair to everyone, but I’d say that, here it’s better than in the world [the rest of Swaziland]. We are protected, we are given food, we are given clothes you know”. Later James’s explanation of what was positive about Bulembu echoed Marissa’s point of view. Speaking of his violent past he said, James’s somewhat ambiguous appreciation of this is illuminated in his statement “it’s better to leave it all behind, it’s another world out there”.

This was the first instance of the series of binary oppositions that repeatedly came up when Marissa spoke about her life in Bulembu in relation to her previous life lived back home. She exclaimed that she “couldn’t stand the sight of home” and when she went home for a home visit she made sure it was only for a day, to say “hi and bye”. Even though like my other young informants, Marissa did not view Bulembu as her permanent home, nor her Bulembu family as her family but rather *like* her family, she viewed Bulembu positively. However, like the other older girls and boys, she complained about the stringency of Bulembu’s rules:

“Sometimes it’s hard in Bulembu because the rules are so strict. I just think they are very tough. Everyday there is a new rule. No cellphones, no Internet, no dating, no speaking to the workers, they are not allowed to talk to us... How are we going to survive in the real world if we are not allowed to do anything? Sometimes they have to advise us to go home even if we don’t want to and learn about life. Cause it won’t help you staying in Bulembu for the rest of your life, cause one day you’ll have to go there. We have already started learning about the real world out there, when we do some odd jobs but it’s not the same”.

She completed her frustrations with the stringency of Bulembu’s rules by saying “sometimes I feel like I am, you know, a fish in a box because of the way that they treat us”. This powerful metaphor spoke to each of the young people’s grievances about the isolation that they felt given Bulembu’s dislocation from the rest of Swaziland and the lack of freedom that they experienced on a daily basis. [See Appendix A]. Asking me to give him my number for when he ‘got out’ [of Bulembu], James likened the town to “a prison”. Over and over again I met with Bulembu youths yearning for the freedom of their previous lives, telling me of their dreams to “go to South Africa” or to “Canada”¹⁸ when they finished school and that they were only still here “because of school”. When I asked James why he thought there were so many rules, particularly the cell phone rule he said, “They’re afraid we might contact our relatives and they might convince us to escape and stupid things like that”.

¹⁸ Although not documented it here given the fact that during the time of my research the funding had been stopped (ostensibly due to “visionary” differences) Bulembu was initially funded by a Canadian Christian Philanthropist. The majority of donations (particularly clothing donations) and the volunteers that lived and worked in Bulembu however, were still from Canada.

Therefore although the content of my interviews with my young adult informants were highly varied, the interviews interestingly mirrored my younger informants' perception of Bulembu as an island, almost an imaginary, a protected 'play-play' land dislocated from the rest of 'real world' Swaziland. In the map work that I had undertaken with my younger informants when asked to draw a map of Bulembu, a method inspired by Reynold's (1989) work undertaken with children of Crossroads in the Western Cape, one of the boys in my sample group drew Bulembu as an island surrounded by the sea [See appendix B]. The others also had little conception of what lay beyond Bulembu's borders. They understood that their "really homes" were somewhere 'out there', yet they had little conception of its geographical situatedness. The world of my young informants largely consisted of a number of loosely connected places; Canada, the home of the volunteers, South Africa, where the managers came from, and where most of them hoped to go and the rest of Swaziland, where they used to live. This sense of isolation was further compounded in the flashcard exercise that we did. I printed out a series of photographs from Google Images of a house (a simple brick structure), a Swazi homestead, a church, a clinic, and a photograph of quintessential 1950s photograph of a white nuclear family around a dinner table. I sat with the boys and girls of each house on separate occasions and showed them each picture and asked them to speak to it. What was it? What did it remind them of? Where had they seen this type of thing before? On both occasions my young informants spoke candidly and knowledgably about each image. Yet, they did not answer, that is 'a house' or that is 'a church' but rather they related each image to their immediate environment. For instance, pointing to the brick structure, Thandi said "that is number Three", while Amanda grabbed the photograph of the family and excitedly said "this, this is the lodge! I know because when I went to Chinda to get a milk shake I saw this family eating pizza". Looking at the photograph of the clinic, Zindi said "this is the clinic in Piggs Peak I was there before I came to Bulembu". These experiential and emotive descriptions of photos unrelated to their environment spoke clearly to my young informants' narrow zones of referentiality.

Furthermore, not only did these maps allow insight into the bounded lifeworlds of the children in my sample group but also how tightly their worlds were bound by adult actants who set the parameters of what was and was not 'out of bounds' (Reynolds, 1989: 94). They demonstrated the extent to which the children's movements/ use of

territory through the town were carefully managed/restricted and surveyed and hence compounded my observations that the youths 'hanging out' in town, on the roadsides, by the corner store or the garage or collecting wood on the town's forested peripheries were *not* BMS children. After asking both my sample groups to take me on a town tour, an exercise that was itself met with suspicion by the social workers and their respective house aunties, I asked them to draw and label a map of Bulembu for me. They were to colour-code them; shading in the areas where they spent most of their time in green/blue and the places and spaces where they did not go/thought were dangerous/were not allowed to go, in red. Although they undertook the exercise separately, the green shaded areas in all the maps I received were the same. The maps indicate that the children spend most of their time, between home and school, at the field at Chinda at the top of the town near the lodge and at 'the vault' in the administrative buildings - the place where as Xolani put it "we get our clothes and shoes and bags and where they solve our problems". Most of the town was shaded in red [see Appendix C]. The village just below the children's homes was either shaded in red or else completely absent from the maps. Sitting around house Three's dining room table I asked the girls why all of them had shaded the village in red. They instantly responded "because we are not allowed to go there", "because it is dangerous", "because they (the people living there) will take us". A few of them also indicated on their drawings that Malanda, the neighbouring village, where according to Xolani "the other people live" was "a dangerous place". The binaries of safe, dangerous, good and bad spaces, led to a stark bifurcation of the town's space, readily limited the physical 'lifeworlds' of the BMS children and as described in Chapter Three often produced tenuous relationships between BMS and the people who lived and worked in the town but were not involved in childcare. A conversation with Leanne a woman who had set up the Community Care Centre in Bulembu, a pre-school for workers' children is illustrative of this social tension. Leanne claimed that she had set up the centre because there was no where for the workers' children to learn and play given the fact that most of them could not afford Bulembu Christian Academy's (BCA) school fees. When I asked the children in my sample group whether they ever played with the children at the centre or in their playground they told me they were "not allowed" to. I asked if the children from the community were allowed to play in their playground and again I was told, "no, they're not allowed to".

It is important to remember that although their containment and strict monitoring produced a significant amount of anxiety for my young informants it is clear that this did not prevent them from desiring lives outside of Bulembu and imagining what they would become once it was time to leave - lives they possibly could not have imagined without BMS's intervention in their lives. Perhaps then, following Deleuze (cited by Henderson, 2009: 25) who reminds us of the porosity of space, in his statement that journeys through space "involve the mediation between what is encountered in the real world and the imaginary appropriation of the encounter", this 'imaginative capital' is a form of agency within constraint in itself. However, altogether the claustrophobic sense of over-protection that my older informants expressed and the restricted use of space that my younger informants spoke of and illustrated, provided insight into the very particular ways in which BMS attempted to construct the space of the children's village and curtail its young inhabitants' use of this space. In the context of the organisation's anxiety over child protection given the children's often traumatic histories, the careful delineation of (supervised) space can be read as a tool towards BMS's 'rescue mission' and an attempt to 'normalise' their distinctly disrupted and accordingly, 'dysfunctional' childhoods. Where space, as Henri Lefebvre (1976: 31) states, "is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics" but rather deeply political and strategic, anthropologists have understood the propensity for adults to 'over-protect' and hence limit children's movements through space to be part of a very particular ('western') model of childhood. Henderson (2009:15), largely reflecting on Warner's (1994) work on childhood tropes, writes "the drive to place children within protected spaces, or keep them out of certain spaces concerns the stereotypes with which children are viewed involving tropes of childhood" vulnerability, "innocence and its opposite".

If left unattended, forced to 'head' households or live on the streets for example, children in popular and media descriptions are often described as 'out of place' and at risk of descending into 'innocent's opposite', of becoming 'feral' and 'unsocialised' (Scheper-Hughes, 1994; Henderson, 2009; Bray, 2004). As observed by Rachel Bray (2004: 39; Meintjes & Bray, 2006) the HIV epidemic and its associated high rates of orphanhood has led to the proliferation of fear-driven predictions around socialisation circulating in the popular media. This moral panic is rooted in the logic that "poor socialisation will mean that children orphaned by AIDS will not live within society's

moral codes” and that “large numbers of asocial or antisocial children will precipitate a breakdown in (society’s) social fabric”. Read in this way, BMS’s preoccupation with protection through spatial monitoring, and separation can be seen to be part of their moral regenerative/restorative efforts, the to return the “cordoned space of (childhood) innocence” and as a corrective to these deep-seated fears around child vulnerability. To be brought up in Bulembu then, is to be ‘born again’ into a protective and dependent ‘bubble’, cushioned from the contaminating reaches of unsolicited interaction (Henderson, 2009: 12).

Lastly, from the data gathered it appears that organisation’s intention to create ‘a home away from home’ appeared to work hand in hand with its geographical situatedness. The town’s isolation in this way enabled Bulembu to become the children’s ‘have-to-be home’. Ironically, (in the organisation’s attempt to protect them) the sense of separateness that both my older and younger informants emphasised, from the place of their birth, and from an extended network of relatives that could “convince them to escape” created a sense of socio-cultural dislocation that the organisation was most vocally hesitant of. As mentioned above, their decision to halt adoptions was for the very notion that a child must remain connected to the land of their birth. But what happens, I wondered, when one becomes so far removed, both geographically and ideologically from everything ever known? Was this any different to what the government feared most about the cultural severing processes of international adoption? In light of these interactions with my young informants, I increasingly came to realise how the organisation’s utopian vision of creating a sense of socio-religious singularity also depended to a large extent its isolation.

Part II: ‘The Mainland’

During my fieldwork I spent a significant amount of time traveling the road between Bulembu and Mbabane, or what I had come to call the ‘Island’ and the ‘Mainland’. Time in Mbabane was largely spent conducting interviews and engaging in conversation with people outside of Bulembu involved in providing care for children identified as OVC or at least had strong opinions about care provision. This section presents a number of seemingly disparate ethnographic encounters that together help to embellish the politics around care provision for children in Swaziland. The

encounters provide a necessary ‘counter-voice’ to the perspectives around place and the provision of care that surfaced amongst my BMS informants.

2.6 One

I arrived at the Sandra Lee Centre on the outskirts of the Mbabane industrial area to meet with Robin Pratt, a woman that had dedicated much of her life to taking in children that were in need of a home. She started out working at the government hospital’s Ward 8 looking after abandoned babies and helping mothers’ care for their newborns (*perscomm.* 2012). Later in 2008 Robin had received a large amount of money from a Canadian Christian philanthropist to open her own children’s home (*perscomm.* 2012). Walking through the garden that separated the large, individual children’s houses, Robin had lamented the lack of governmental support that she received for the running of the centre. Showing me around the school, the homely houses and introducing me to the housemothers she had said; “I can’t understand why they won’t help us out, the kids are so happy here, they get a good education, they’re loved and cared for. The government don’t approve of residential care whatsoever. It’s like they still don’t acknowledge that there are abandoned children”.

2.7 Two

A friend of mine was driving up to Bulembu to visit me on a Thursday evening. He claimed to have been driving a little over the speed limit. Just after turning onto *King Mswati Highway* (the road leading to Piggs Peak) he was stopped by the police. It was a time (and still is) in Swaziland where there are police roadblocks everywhere, and where you are fined (a fairly negotiable fine) for absolutely anything, from driving barefoot to listening to the music too loud. Word on the street is that in a time of deepening economic crisis and frequent civil service strikes, the police force is just trying to pay their own salaries. Rolling down his window, the said friend smiled apologetically at the officer, and said “please sir, I am in a hurry to get to Bulembu before nightfall because the road is so bad”. The officer unimpressed by the mention of Bulembu responded; “Bulembu, those people are stealing our children” and with a shake of his head and the click of his tongue, demanded the fine.

2.8 Three

I had organised to meet with one of the directors of NERCHA. NERCHA is an organising body that was created in 2001 under the Prime Minister’s office.

“NERCHA was created to coordinate and facilitate” the national Multisectoral HIV/AIDS response and oversee the implementation of national strategic plans and frameworks” (www.nercha.org.sz). One of NERCHA’s largest initiatives to “enable the provision of care” has been setting up countrywide Neighbourhood Care Points (NCPs). With the ‘tagline’ ‘Making the vulnerable children visible’ NCPs are seen as a large-scale primary response and “lasting solution” to managing the ‘orphan crisis’ (UNICEF, 2006: 5). According to UNICEF’s informational pamphlet (2006:6), based on “a traditional concept that recognises orphans and vulnerable children as the responsibility of the community in which they live (*bantfwana bendlunkhulu*)” NCPs are created in the community where children are “provided with a hot meal, participate in non-formal learning and recreational activities and receive health care and psychosocial support”. Irrespective of the fact that many of the NCPs in Swaziland are under ‘staffed’, under serviced, entirely dependent on food aid and willing and able community volunteers, NCPs are heralded as “an important vehicle for the emergency delivery of basic services to the increasing number of OVC in Swaziland” (*perscom.* 2012; 2007:4). According to a recent case study, (although largely absent in any quantitative analysis of the *content* of care) stated that starting 18 NCPs around the country in 2002 the project has grown considerably “with 625 NCOs established by the end of 2006” that ostensibly serve “about 50 000 OVC nationwide” (*ibid*).

In the interview with NERCHA’s director I set out to find out more about what opinions parastatals like this, with an emphasis on NCP-type community based response had about alternative ‘non-institutional’ residential care programmes such as BMS and the Sandra Lee Centre. His response, revealing the politics between these two frameworks of care was typical of much of the comparative evaluative literature I had read on care provision for children in the context of (predominantly) AIDS-related adversity (Donahue & Williamson, 1998, 2004; Desmond & Gow, 2001; Phiri, Foster & Nzima, 2001; Foster, 2002; Phiri & Web, 2002; Strebel, 2004; Beard, 2006; Schenk, 2009). Aside from stating that the NCP model was the most cost effective form of care reaching the greatest number of children, in interesting conversation with BMS’s own claims, the director spoke of the ‘culturally appropriate’ nature of the response. This conforms to the widespread notion that “traditionally in African cultures children belong to the whole community” (Beard, 2005: 107). Beard’s

(2005:106) assessment of Malawian OVC care programmes mirrors NERCHA's perspective. She writes; "the model of care preferred by Africans is community based because this keeps a child in a family environment in their own village" (2005:107). Further supporting the Africa-wide movement towards such programmes, Beard suggests that such programmes are important because they "provide opportunities for social and spiritual well being and impart to children a sense of belonging in the community" (*ibid*). Similarly, the NERCHA's director asserted, "from a policy and sustainability perspective, the best option is culture; the children belong to the culture and their communities". In my subsequent request to compare care "options", he said:

We do not encourage residential care but we can acknowledge that it is necessary. But it should be a last resort option that should be done through a process and that process is not being done in Swaziland. Everything should be done before removing a child from their place of origin and this is not being done.

The director further raised common concerns about this process of removal (Schenk, 2009). Assuming that 'removal' meant a complete break with one's past, and the people and places in one's past, he asked, "What happens when the 'child' is to be reintegrated into their community?" This notion of reintegration re-emphasised the symbolic importance of home and mirrored Londiwe's, one of my Mbabane informant's anxieties about taking a child away from their "place of origin".

In conversation with Londiwe about the importance of place in the upbringing of a child, she said "a child must grow in their country, they must grow knowing their motherland, their place, their culture and their relatives". Asking her what happened if they still lived in Swaziland but in a place like Bulembu she responded:

Kids have to be put in one place and not be robbed of their benefits. In the old days there were no orphans there were extended families and so there were no orphans. But that was the old days. So when it is time to leave, they must return to their places ruled by chiefs for their fathers. They must inherit these places, these places are their [rural] homes and if they have a problem they must go home.

Here Londiwe, like my other informants emphasises the socio-symbolic importance of the rural base as home and the proper space in which a Swazi child should be raised or in the case that a child cannot be raised there, must maintain this connection from a distance. Linguistically solidifying this connection is that in Siswati “rural areas are also known as *emakhaya* which is the plural of *ekhaya* and means home” (Laterza, 2012: 188). In her declaration that children must go home to “their places ruled by chiefs for their fathers” Londiwe also, by implication references the *Kukhonta* system. Although updated in 2005 under the new constitution to include female inheritance, the *Kukhonta* system refers to the customary law that affords the right to any Swazi male to “pay tribute to a chief in return for a piece of Swazi Nation land” (Land owned by the King and held in trust for the Swazi people). The right to use (to build on and cultivate) this land is automatically transferred to relatives with the sole requirement that it does not lay fallow (*Ibid*, 2012: 8).

Londiwe continued:

In a year’s time what can you find back home? Nothing. Nobody will know you. If you grow up outside home no one will recognise that you are from here. If they don’t see me a lot how do they know me? How can they take me back? Other people will take their places. They will lose contacts with their relatives and family and friends and there will be land grabbers. If your land is not being used, especially in this time, people take advantage of kids and they will take your land. It’s not legal but people do, people are starting to sell land and much of the land they sell belongs to people who have died.

Londiwe’s concerns around ‘socio-cultural estrangement’ and the very real possibilities of dislocation in the face of lawless ‘land grabbing’ was repeated in an interview with Jane Cox, a woman who had set up the *Moya Centre* – an NGO in the Malkerns region to aid Child (and young adult) Headed Households (CHH). Jane repeatedly mentioned the dangers of people stealing and subsequently selling children’s’ land in the absence of their parents and the need to ensure that the land is used and the children’s inherited ties to the land remain visible.

2.9 Reflections

Together these perspectives provide an interesting and ironic soundboard to those held by my BMS informants. They paradoxically echo my BMS informants' preoccupation with the necessity to raise children within the nation space and within a 'traditional' home-like environment. They represent an increasingly vociferous and highly politicised commitment to drawing the 'essential' link between culture, identity and place, and consequently a deeper engagement with the ideas surrounding the 'proper' place of Swazi children. However, these views point to the ways in which the space of the nation is inherently fragmented. A child's place is not only understood to be within the territorial boundaries of the nation state, but is more specifically, narrowly rooted within a 'community', preferably 'rural' context. Robin's lament about the lack of governmental support she receives reinforces this perception. Her claim that the government does not recognise abandonment, highlights the symbolic import placed on 'the community' and 'its' ability to absorb and care for un-parented children. Removal from a community context, irrespective of categorical vulnerability is considered to be a form of dislocation, or even, theft, as described by the police officer above. Irrespective of the essentially fluid and deterritorialised nature of identity, in the sense that people and things never 'stay put', the boundaries of child citizenship are inextricably linked to the 'growing process', and specifically *where* a child grows. Space or land in this sense becomes imbued with a transferrable, absorbable identity-building substance.

Furthermore, although the rights based language of 'best interests' and 'good practice' is seemingly absent from my informant's views, the principles of protection that such concepts evoke stand as the ethical backbone behind such projects. Taking into consideration the 'best interests' of the child in any form of intervention is the leading principle of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC) and as such is the moral driving force (and schism) between of various child-focused protection developmental projects (Reynolds, Niewenhuys, Hanson, 2006: 292). In the opinions above, protection in terms of meeting children's basic needs through the provision of food, education and support facilitated through the NCP programme is brought to the fore. However, here, the need to protect and facilitate the right to 'culture' through ensuring that a child remains attached to the land in which their relatives reside surfaces as equally important. This perhaps stands as a form of redress

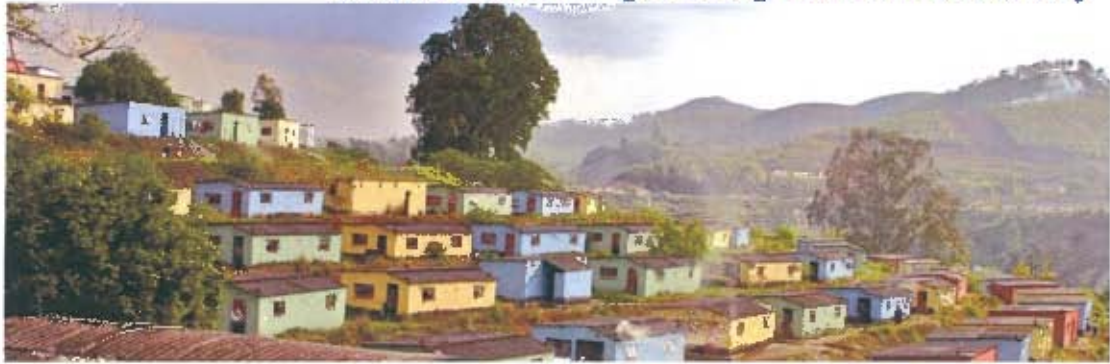
emerging out of the frequently contested universal applicability of Children's Rights discourse. Highlighting the fact "that seemingly well intentioned attempts at addressing the admittedly pressing needs of children in the developing world may turn out entirely different in practice" researchers have made urgent calls for the need to culturally contextualise children's rights, to 'tailor' globalising rights discourse to local needs (Reynolds et al, 2006: 293). Statements such as "by listening to the people of Africa the worldwide community can learn how to work with them as they care for millions of orphaned children" and "development practitioners need to have knowledge of African responses to their problems such that interventions from the global community are culturally appropriate" predominate African-centred rights based literature on 'orphan' care. In both my BMS and non-BMS adult informants' perspectives, essentialist understandings of cultural continuation, although interpreted and utilised variously, surfaced strongly as the programmatic driving forces. Although they present very particular and somewhat dialectically opposed ideological investments in childhood both illustrated an obsession with the 'place' and 'placement' of children (Moss & Petrie 2006, Henderson, 2009: 44). There is no doubt, (and anthropologists have repeatedly shown) that calling attention to the need to localise Children's Rights is integral to the best practice of any intervention. At the same time however, and although I expand upon this in more detail in Chapter Four, essentialist understandings of culture masked in the rhetoric of best interests and good practice may in fact occlude children's more pressing needs, the priorities that they themselves have set and more powerful care programmes.

2.10 Conclusion

Together the two parts that make up this chapter have explored the ideological dimensions and socio-political implications there of, of the physical space (both the spatial organisation and geographical situatedness) of the children's village. The first part introduced the spatial layout of the town, the intentions behind this organisational logic and the perceived importance of place and home in the placement of 'parentless' children. This led to an exploration of my young informants' experiences of living life in this highly structured environment to reveal their paradoxical conceptions of home and feelings of dislocation. In a further complication and politicisation of place, contrary to BMS's intentions, these feelings of dislocation hardened into concerns on the part of my non-BMS informants around the inevitable 're-integration' of young

people having been spent much of their lives in an over-protected and geographically isolated residential care programme.

Chapter Three: “growing kids in God’s way”



A view of the individual children’s homes in Dudzi village, Bulembu (www.Bulembu.org)

“Vital force is made manifest not through the creation of the Island but its recreation, its rebirth or renaissance after a catastrophe following its birth, the pushing above the sea, where the survivors of an originary deluge recommence life as such” (Deleuze, 2000: 216).

3.1 Introduction

Irrespective of the island-like ‘structure of feeling’ that Bulembu created for people, and particularly the young people who live there, the town, in a material, geographical and ideological sense, is deeply connected to the ‘outside world’ – to a ‘willing’ workforce beyond its borders, to the necessary stuff that can only be bought or donated from elsewhere and more generally, to the global circulation of humanitarian ideals and evangelical imaginings (Laterza, 2012: 31). Aside from a spiritually binding, boarder transcending connection to a worldwide community of born again Christians, that Piot (2012: 11) describes as the ‘Christian global’, today, one of the fundamental ways in which the residents of Bulembu are connected to ‘the mainland’ is through relational ties created through an ‘out-sourcing’ of motherhood. This chapter traces the ways in which BMS attempts to remake relational ties between children in need of extra-familial care and the women employed to take care of them. Remembering, Gilles Deleuze’s (2000:215) vision of “the Island as an embryo of concepts”, it focuses on the ideological forces behind the birth of the organisation’s goals of ‘recreating’ families and the ways in which these ideas materialize at ground level. Using ethnographic material and the anthropology of materiality as a point of theoretical engagement, I look at the ways in which BMS attempts to cultivate a particular kind of Christ conscious personhood within the young people who live

there. What BMS refers to as “growing kids in God’s way” is seen to provide guidelines to modes of being and the moral sustenance that will fulfill organisational intention and enable their children to grow into the ‘leaders of tomorrow’. Thus, whereas Chapter Two focused on the question of *where* ‘parentless’ children should be placed, this chapter focuses on *how* children in the absence of close kinship circles should grow.

The notion of re-birth is essential to Bulembu’s socio-economic and spiritual philosophy. In Chapter Two I outlined the town’s growth, how, over the past five years Sigubhe has been transformed from a desolate ‘ghost town’ into what BMS describes as a bustling ‘town with a heart’. During this time its population has grown from 100 to over 1000 residents. BMS’s vision of ‘sustainability’ through the birth of a number of business ventures, although most still in their infancy, is well on its way. Here, like Erica Bornstein describes in *The Spirit of Development* (2005) her institutional ethnography of Protestant non-governmental organizations in Zimbabwe, spirituality and economic development are inseparable. It is this inseparability of faith and finance that leads Laterza (2012) to refer to Bulembu missionaries as ‘Business missionaries’. The director of childcare expressed:

“Nothing we do is separated from faith, faith is the driver of change. If I am working in the lodge I could still do that for God. I can do that wherever I am... God has called me to this place to raise leaders, to look after orphans. Serving God and Christ, you do it everyday. It is interwoven into everyday. Its an individual relationship”

In this statement the director reveals how religious ideas, and particularly those attached to being a born again Christian, a term associated with spiritual rebirth, salvation and a personal relationship with Christ, inform and intersect with “the moral dynamics of economic development” (Bornstein, 2005: 1, 2; Fore, 2012:1). Faith is seen here as the driving force of developmental change, infiltrating into every aspect of life and the sole foundation upon which all Bulembu’s businesses are built. Bornstein (2005:50) refers to this intention to live life in the manner and motivation of Christ in such a way that belief becomes inseparable from practice as “lifestyle evangelism”. Many of the staff in different business sectors told me that if you work

at Bulembu, no matter what you do whether in the dairy or the water plant, you are “doing for the children” – to raise money for *their* futures. Similarly, yet perhaps more transparently, the house aunties often spoke about how helping ‘orphans’ was the *Christian thing to do*, but also something that would ensure their own place in the afterlife’s ‘Kingdom of God’. Faith in this sense was seen by many of Bulembu’s employees as the rubric through which the logic of development was interpreted (Bornstein, 2005: 65). And as the director indicates, it is through the care of the ‘orphaned’ child, a task to which the director and most of the BMS staff testified to have been “called”, that one’s faith is given ‘pure’ dimension. When I asked “why children?” without a moments hesitation he responded:

“God gave us a vision to raise leaders. That vision is of God. In the bible there is a verse (James I verse 27) that says in God’s eyes pure religion is taking care of orphans and widows. Pure religion. Its because of their helplessness”.

Organisational visions of rescuing these children from their ‘helplessness’ and ‘raising leaders’ is not merely a question of the physical removal of children from their destructive/neglectful/abusive/absent homes and providing them with food, shelter and education. The notion of ‘raising leaders’ and ‘remaking’ lives is deeply embedded in a spiritual-moral framework that involves the nurturing of a particular Christ conscious personhood. Asking the director what the statement raising leaders of tomorrow personally meant to him, he clarified:

“A leader is somebody you can follow. We want to raise someone who can be a responsible, productive and respectable citizen. What we want to do is give the kids the tools they need to become that way, a leader. The core of that is Christianity, Christian morality, following Jesus’s cause. Taking Christ as their leader their own chances of being successful leaders are higher...you’re a leader in your community. It’s a natural process. To become Christ-like is first, the other things will follow”.

The focus on what children will become, what Allison James (2011: 733) describes as their *becoming* rather than their *being* is a central theme in anthropological scholarship. Both James (2011) and Malkki (2011) suggest that this notion rests on the understanding that children embody futurity, in that people often attach to children their own dreams and visions of the future. Here, as demonstrated above, BMS's preoccupation with the future of these children and *through* these children, their broader visions of the 're-birth' of a nation are grounded in Christian evangelism, the cycles of salvation, and End Times narrative and altogether the transformative power of faith (Piot, 2012:4). Rebirth in this sense is not seen only as the rejuvenation of a town, but the rejuvenation of spirit too.

One of the key ways in which the organisation foresees the materialisation of this process is through the envisioned power of maternal care. The relationship between the house aunties and the children 'assigned' to their care lies at the very heart of BMS's humanitarian intervention.

3.2 Laboured love

It was a Monday morning and I was sitting in the Ministry, the offices at the back of the administrative building waiting to see a social worker so she could 'prep' me on the day's activities. There was a bustle in the offices and I learnt that it was interview day for the hiring of new house-aunties. It is important to note that even though BMS saw the house-aunties as mothers and hoped that the children would in turn view them as their mothers, they were referred to as 'auntie', a kind of paradoxical semantic distancing that they trusted would not 'confuse' or 'upset' the children, who knew or would come to know that they were not their 'real' mothers, but rather 'like' their mothers. I was told that it was not always this way and that in the past the house aunties were referred to as 'house mothers'. Emphasizing the perceived power that a name holds, I learnt that this semantic shift was driven by the fact that, as Lorraine put it, "there is permanency in the word mother". Where there is no permanency in care given the constant 'turn over' of house aunties and the expected trauma attached to the loss of another mother, BMS saw this as a necessary title change.

On this day, there were eight women seated on the couches in the corner of the room. They were the few that had passed the initial screening test – the telephone interview.

The live interview was the next step in the application process. They were waiting expectantly to prove their worth as mothers to children they had never met. They were each holding a pink-bound SiSwati bible, comparing notes, and awaiting their turn behind the closed door. On inquiring into the selection process, Thobile explained that they first ask the women “why they want to work with kids”. She said that this was the most important question because “most of them just want to do it for the money” and that they need to see that they “have love for the children”. She also said that a lot of the questions were discipline-focused. For example, the women were given a scenario, such as, “what would you do if a thirteen year old spoke back to you?” Thobile explained that they wanted to find out what “forms of punishment they know. All Swazi’s hit their children” but we at “least want to see that they can change, we teach them about ‘time out’ and if they do not want to learn, they are out”.

I remember the childcare director telling me on my very first day in Bulembu that, “finding mothers is the hardest part”. Reiterating Thobile’s sentiment, he exclaimed, “most of the women we get in for the interviews are desperately in need of jobs and we just can’t hire them”. He also explained that most of the women “only stay for a short time while they find another job, because they can’t bring all their children to Bulembu with them”. He said that the younger women usually leave to get married and even though they would prefer older women, they have trouble communicating with the children as they “don’t speak English and struggle to help them with their homework”. According to the director, another problem with hiring older women is that they also have their own “extended families” and are “too ‘communized’”- a statement that I understood to mean ‘too traditional’ or ‘too settled in their ways’ to adapt to the type of care BMS envisions. Overall, he said that “it’s not an easy situation” especially in a “time of HIV, very few women live over the age of 35”.

Hence, the director meant that finding what BMS understood to be *suitable* mothers, Christian, well-intentioned, adaptable and English speaking mothers was difficult. Given an increased ‘bread-winning’ responsibility, deep-seated gender inequality and the current depressed economic climate, there is no shortage of women in search of jobs. The ways in which these women ‘willingly’ left families of their own to ‘adopt’ the role of a maternal caregiver to up to nine children, is illustrative of the workings of what anthropologists have documented extensively (particularly in relation to the

institution of domestic work) and referred to as 'stratified reproduction', or in this instance, stratified reproductive care (Cock, 1980; Colen, 1990; Davis, 1987; Murray, 1998; Rapp, 1999). Stratified reproduction refers to the ways in which physical and social reproductive tasks, the taken for granted 'labours of love' are accomplished differently and inseparably from inequalities that are based on hierarchies of class, race, gender and ethnicity and are structured by social, economic and political forces (Rose, 2003: 98; Morreira, 2008). Furthermore, although the HIV epidemic is a window onto an array of well-documented interlocking structural inequalities, its gendered underpinnings are most prominent here. Even beyond the scope of their immediate or extended families it is women who are called upon to fill the gaps of care, who "shoulder the burden of care for those who are sick, dying or orphaned by AIDS" (Leclerc-Madlala, 2001: 535; van Blerk & Ansell, 2006: 452). Hence, although concealed by the BMS's goal to normalise the children's childhoods by reproducing 'traditional' family-like structures of care, the 'outsourcing' of motherhood and the remunerated 'gift' of care is both socioeconomically and epidemiologically produced.

During my fieldwork I was granted permission to attend a single day of house auntie training workshops, entitled 'Growing kids in God's way' and conducted by Elaine, the kitchen manager and part-time social worker. The workshop was foundational to deepening my understanding of what BMS understood to be appropriate forms of childcare. Accompanying what I learnt in the workshop was a wealth of observational and conversational data concerning the parameters of parenting and the expected operation of households.

On hiring, the house aunties are placed on a probation program for six months. They are paid a reduced salary and expected to adhere to organisational rules. After successfully completing the probation period they are accepted as full-time house aunties. The house aunties are given time off every three weeks and a 'rotating house aunty' steps in for the week they are away. In the training workshop it was emphasised that the house aunties were to take on the role of both parents, that they were to be responsible for keeping a watchful eye over their respective children at all times, ensuring their physical and psychological wellbeing and for "shaping the conscience of the child". They were to remind their children that God is the provider,

but simultaneously foster a sense of individuality and make them take responsibility for themselves. Prayer and chores (such as washing their own clothes, making their beds and cleaning their rooms) were essential daily activities for the children. Passages from the New Testament were drawn upon to illustrate, support, inspire and justify these teachings. Scripture was used to demonstrate how the house aunties should “set the moral standards”, to teach their children the difference between right and wrong. For example, Elaine drew on the story of David who hid the word of God in his heart in order to illustrate the importance of viewing one’s heart as a “warehouse” to be filled with “the values of God”. It was emphasised that the house aunties must not “remove scripture” and give their own interpretations, but rather “always put God’s word first”.

In a focus group that I conducted with a group of house aunties, I asked them what was the most important lesson that they had learnt in the training workshop. They reported that it had taught them how to interact with their children using ‘love language’. Expanding on this concept, Fikile one of the most vocal and forthcoming of the house aunties said:

“To me it’s the love language. Sometimes you don’t notice a child when it’s acting with love, like when a child is playing next to you, you chase them out but they are showing that they love you. We give them hugs it comes naturally but we used to ignore them. Maybe its because we grew up in a different way. We used to say, “mummy mum” and our mothers would say “Go and play! Or go and wash the dishes!” When we look at it now we find that we were abusing them somehow but not noticing so here we learn how to do this differently. It opens our eyes to a different way. We have encouraging words, we say good boy “keep it on my boy, that’s good’ we didn’t know before that we had to do this. We learnt the opposite of love language from our parents.

Fikile’s statement was met with hums of agreement. Similarly, Janice expressed, it is important because, “the children come from all over the place, with different backgrounds”. She said that it was their responsibility to “encourage them”; to plant the seed of love and make them behave well, to heal them and make them ‘one’.

Another house-auntie, Julie said that the most important lesson was “the discipline, I didn’t know that I could take a child and put it in time out, I just smacked them. I’ve learnt a lot about disciplining a child and it helps me discipline my own children better”.

I then asked the focus group how they undertake the difficult task of remaking a family - of making them ‘one’. They agreed that there were various ‘ingredients’ for this. Sharing daily prayers in the home and sharing a house table in the dining hall were seen as essential components to creating a familial bond. Fikile said, “we treat them the same, we give them love and make them feel secure. We tell them that this is their family and this is their home and these are their brothers and sisters” and that “this is the one to help you now when you have a problem”.

Throughout the focus group it became clear that the house aunties saw their job as challenging but also as a moral priority. Having faith and ‘being a Christian’ in this context was seen as essential. Lindie, a house auntie that I worked closely with emphasised this notion by stating “because these are not our children...if you are not a Christian you can’t do this job. If you have a problem you must tell God and he will help you”.

The sense that the house aunties’ had a moral obligation towards these children was echoed in my discussions with them about the reasons for undertaking the job. The economic necessities of job seeking were largely occluded by their declarations of the need to help ‘the orphans’, by their desires, like those of BMS and ‘the project’ of contemporary child focused humanitarianism more generally – to ‘save them’ (Hart, 2006: 6). Justine’s reasoning was exemplary. In a conversation that we had over looking the sports field and watching her boys ride bicycles she said; “Even though its like volunteer work, I do it because I like kids and the orphans need our help”. Lindie held a similar opinion, yet hers was grounded in a personal identification with children in the absence of close familial care:

“I grew up like these kids, that’s why I am here. My father took me to grow up with his mother, when my mother died. Life was hard and I never had a mother that is why I am here. I have three of my own

children at home they are staying with my husband and my mother-in-law. But there is stress at home with the husband and with the kids taking other girls”.

I asked Lindie if it was difficult to leave her children and she responded, “it is not difficult to leave them because I identify more with these children, with their lives...and the job is not difficult because I know these kids, how I can say, because I understand these kids”. She went on, “I feel angry when my kids are crying but with these kids, I understand and I remember when I used to sit alone and feel pain”. However, adding another layer of intent to these perspectives, yet similarly pointing to very fine line between choice and coercion in conditions of structural constraint, it was also emphasised by Lindie and by a number of other house aunties, that if they “helped the orphans” God would in turn, help them. This justification was particularly striking given the reality that the job could not secure their own children’s futures. Following on from our conversation, Lindie candidly said, “they do not pay us enough for my own children’s school fees but it is okay because in the end God will help us”.

Altogether from the perspectives above, it is clear that the house aunties viewed their responsibility toward their ‘assigned’ children as a rehabilitative one. Mirroring organisational intention, the house aunties saw themselves as the central and transformative channel through which the tangible ‘substance’ of care, and the ‘language of love’, was to be transferred to the children and through which they too, would be transformed. Family-like care and a maternal bond in particular, were seen, in materialist terms as the affective ‘glue’ that would bind a family, that came “from all over the place”, together, normalise previously disruptive childhoods and in essence foster the “growth of a moral body” (Fife, 2001). In conjunction with the education the children received, regular meals and medical check-ups, the (carefully monitored) practices of care provided by the house aunties, the children were expected to be transformed into morally-upstanding child citizens in possession of the qualities to transition into the adult role of Swaziland’s ‘leaders of tomorrow’ and ‘pillars of hope’.

3.3 Moral pioneers

“With its oddities, passionate visions and contradictions, Bulembu is a true frontier.

Missionaries and workers of a different kind from the concessionaries and missionaries that flooded Swaziland in the 1800s, but pioneers non the less” (Laterza, 2012: 31).

BMS’s desire to “Grow kids in God’s way” can be interpreted in a number of ways. Where the ‘reach for theory’ often involves tangential approaches to analyzing raw ethnographic data, I have found Rayna Rapp’s (1999) work around new reproductive technologies and the scientifically mediated production of ‘moral pioneers’ *conceptually* useful for thinking through the subjectification processes at work here. Faced with complex decisions opened up by new reproductive technologies and the possibilities of mapping out unborn lives, Rapp refers to men and women having to engage new ways of understanding, judging and acting on themselves as “moral pioneers of a new kind of active biomedical citizenship (Rose, 2003: 23). Rapp’s work is part of a growing corpus of anthropological engagement with what has been described as ‘biological citizenship’. According to Rose and Novas (2003:3) biological citizenship signifies a new kind of citizenship made possible by the emergence of contemporary biotechnology. However, such ‘citizenship projects’ – “the ways that authorities thought/think about individuals as citizens and potential citizens and the ways they tried to act upon them”, are deeply rooted in history and have for centuries radically redefined the relationship between politics, identity and biology. The authors argue that citizenship has been ‘in evolution’ since the emergence of the civil rights movement that “necessitated the extension of political citizenship in the nineteenth century and of social citizenship in the twentieth century” (Rose & Novas, 2003: 1).

Although my own research falls outside the purview of biotechnology, it is possible to borrow, significantly reformulate and apply Rapp’s term to the ethnographic context under study. Here, the term ‘moral pioneering’ can be used to describe Bulembu’s own ‘citizen project’, with their own concern over the importance of identity embedded in their long-term vision of shaping, through various transformative channels, the growth of a moral generation – a ‘new’ form of being in the world. It

can be argued that Bulembu's project is biological in the sense that it mimics the Swazi government's fundamentally national concern over 'citizenship building', over the need to preserve Swazi nationhood and thus the 'need' to limit a child's growth to the nation space.

Furthermore, it is possible to take the pioneering metaphor, in its more historical, definitional sense, a step further. Although, as discussed further below, I am by no means assuming that the BMS children simply 'embodied' these organisational intentions but from the Foucauldian perspective of the body as a tool for social discourse and the iconic location of/for technologies of power, it is difficult to ignore the echoes of a colonialist kind of (govern)mentality at work here. To treat the body, and particularly the child's body, as a somewhat empty "warehouse" to be filled with good and proper 'ingredients', has unmistakable colonial, principally Christian evangelical antecedents (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991; Sen, 2005; Piot, 2012). In Fife's, *Creating the Moral Body: Missionaries and the Technology of Power in early Papua New Guinea* (2001), he examines the technologies of power embedded in the colonial encounter and its 'civilizing mission'. Fife (2001: 266) argues that formalized schooling, a physically encompassing environment and extensive church activity were central forces, executed by missionaries in an attempt to "capture and change the consciousness of young people", inculcate moral habits and hygiene "with the goal of creating Christian and civilized villagers".

Similarly, writing about the 'production' of orphaning in British colonial India, Sen (2005: 464) states, "In India during the mid 19th Century, the colonial state began a long and intimate relationship with the children of diverse others". With the perception of children as 'plastic entities' that may be "stamped with a lasting impression from the contamination of culture, language...and savage repression", parents were "deliberately removed from the lives of children". In this way, Sen argues that, as an act of and facilitation of power, orphanages became a "patchwork of spaces, nodes of control that enabled experts to illuminate the dark interior of native society" (Sen, 2005: 463,466). Similar to what Fife reveals, subjectification was facilitated through a number of means, i.e. "through physical removal, through materiality, and through indoctrination" (Sen, 2005: 436). Fife further argues that formalized schooling, a physically encompassing environment and extensive church

activity, were central ‘technologies’, executed by missionaries in an attempt to “capture and change the consciousness of young people”, inculcate moral habits and hygiene “with the goal of creating (‘self-governing’) Christian and civilized villagers” (ibid; Foucault, 1979: 134)

Although now thoroughly located in the post-colonial moment where ‘the vertical sovereignties’ of the philanthropic moralizing mission of the 19th century colonial era appears a distant, unwelcome memory, the authors’ descriptions above of the technologies of power rooted in colonial encounter and their slow, dialectical evolution into technologies of the self, are arguably at work here (Stoler, 1995: 166; Hart & Negri, 2001; 2005; Foucault, 1989: 134) Fife’s notion of “disciplining the body in order to convert the soul” still holds weight today and relates to the underlying spiritual intent of Bulembu’s Christian based model of childcare. In fact, as Bornstein declares (2005: 46), a fundamental aspect of Christian development or what Fassin (2011: 1) calls “moral sentiment” today remains the goal of reaching the ‘unreached’, of directing evangelical attentions “to the suffering of others” as a means of alleviating spiritual and material impoverishment. As Piot (2010; 2012:8) writes in relation to the growing presence of the Pentecostal church movement in contemporary Togo, “these communities of believers instill codes of conduct and orientations toward the everyday that provide a virtual blueprint for disciplining the post Cold war subject into the neoliberal economy”. I would argue that the children’s removal from their faraway homes, their relocation in an isolated environment and community of born again believers, their enrolment in a Christian based education system, the socializing “codes of conduct” they are reminded of daily and the extensive presence of the church in their lives, all work together toward the establishment of a disciplinary biblical ‘blueprint’ for being. These factors all worked towards (or at least, the hope of) establishing an implicit utopian realm or an ‘Edenic’ situation for the intended manifestation of greater good (Bornstein, 2005: 3).

In conjunction with the house-aunties’ statements about coming to learn how to grow kids God’s way, the children in my sample groups’ arrival narratives provide insight into the slow materialisation of these organisational intentions. In a statement that encapsulates the very beginning of this process, Jeremiah had said “On our first night here, they taught us how to eat properly with a knife and fork and not eat with our

hands”. Lastly, borrowing from Foucault, even though what can be described as the organisation’s modes of subjectification in their and their desire to ‘pioneer’ new leaders is not overtly, or even consciously geared towards some form of civilizing mission, their project remains firmly rooted in a relationship of rescue and the desire to ‘save’ a portion of the world’s quintessential humanitarian subjects.

3.4 “They’re not Swazi anymore”

Aside from providing insight into the tightly bound worlds of my young participants, the mapping exercise revealed much about what places figured prominently in their lives. A place present on every map and repeatedly pointed out to me from a high point in *Duduzi* village was what the children referred to as ‘the vault’ located in the Ministry in the administrative block. I am not sure how this room got its name but it captured its purpose perfectly – a secure storeroom housing all of Bulembu’s donated nonperishable goods. Described to me by Ayanda as their “shopping centre”, a rare glance inside the vault revealed shelves overflowing with new and secondhand clothing in every size and colour, rows of *Toughees* and multi-coloured faux crocs, school bags, toys and every other item a child might need/want. The children in my sample group told me that they went to the vault when they “got too big” for their clothes and/or at the beginning of the school term to get new uniforms and stationery. Looking over my field notes I noticed that I spent a lot of time jotting down the details of conversations about clothes, about what the children were wearing and how well they were dressed. I began to be able to distinguish between the ‘Bulembu kids’ and the children that lived in the town because their parents worked for BMS. This distinction was made not only because I would never see the Bulembu kids hanging around unsupervised on the roadside or collecting firewood, but because of what kind of visual distinctions and insight into individual and collective identities “the dressed body enables” (Hansen, 2004: 372). One of the ways that the children could be distinguished was by the colourful donated clothing and the printed Canadian charity organisation t-shirts that they wore or that flapped in the wind on clotheslines like the flags of faraway places - the markers of the “long chains of charity” that bind the world’s ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ in a coincidental intimacy (Norris, 2012: 128).

In order to consider the processes of subjectification, or as Povinelli puts it, the ways in which “discourses are hardened into subjects” discussed above more carefully and

as a way of tracking the micropolitics of BMS's mission more fully, I have drawn on a growing body of anthropological literature around material 'things' and/or 'stuff' (Povinelli, 2006; Hansen, 2004). In his article, *A Praxiological Approach to Subjectification in a Material World*, JP Warnier (2001:6) argues that materiality mediates our being in the world. He points out that, "there is hardly any technique of the body that does not incorporate a given materiality" and all too often "the body is an object of phenomenological/Foucauldian analysis and not the moving and perceiving subject in a given materiality" (Warnier, 2001: 20). Similarly, Daniel Miller in *Stuff* (2010: 4) makes the point that "the best way to understand, convey and appreciate our humanity is through our attention to our fundamental materiality". Hence, from the perspective that objects can indeed come to "construct subjects" (Miller, 2010) in exploring the social consequences of BMS's project of 'growing kids in God's way' and viewing materiality as both an effective and affective "surface" in its ability to construct our appearance, constitute social relations and states of being, this section looks at what materiality *does* (Keane, 2004).

Many of the BMS's workers that I had conversations with about the childcare programme emphasised that they felt somewhat materially 'cut-off' from "the orphans", the people involved in childcare and the people in managerial positions. The question of why they, the people who made the town 'work' lived in comparative poverty without effective sanitation and electricity and had to pay "R100 for firewood", whilst "the orphans" lived in renovated homes and had access to free "lights", clothes and education, was repeatedly raised (*perscom.*, 2011). This deep-felt sense of inequality chiseling lines through the town across age, race and profession surfaces strongly in Laterza's (2012) dissertation exploring "labour relations, epistemology and the body" among Bulembu's timber workers. Zandile, working at the community centre went so far as to describe it as "apartheid". She went on, "There are no orphans in Swaziland, but there are in Bulembu. They don't care about the other children here...the other children are always punished for the orphan's mistakes." It was due to these discrepancies that Leanne, a woman who had headed a number of different child focused projects during her time in Swaziland took it upon herself to open *Eduduzweni*, 'the place of comfort' - a community centre where the workers' children could learn, play and be taken care of during the day. In a conversation with Leigh she said:

“When I arrived here there was very little attention paid to the children in the town in the community, the BMS worker’s children – the ones living here. There is a fear on part of BMS that there are too many community children. It’s the irony really because children are brought in by social welfare to live in a smartie box - whilst there are needy children here. But I am here because it’s a calling. *Eduduzeni* is Christ centred humanitarian organisation with biblical direction at the centre of everyday at the centre of everything. My idea was to work with the children that are not a part of the BMS programme, to provide a place of care for the children. We started it up when we realized a lot of the children were hanging out in the dumpster in the day with nothing to do.”

Also, although the house aunties were wary of speaking to me about their personal gripes, the sense of material alienation they experienced from the children they cared for was frequently raised in the informal conversations we had. A single sentence uttered by Lindiwe in hushed tones of disengaged acceptance is exemplary; “That’s the way it is, everything is for the children, that is their song”. The notion of the material discrepancies between themselves and their children was furthered in the focus group where, to my surprise given the difficult circumstances the children had come from, the aunties spoke about how their BMS children “were the lucky ones”, how they had “much better” childhoods than they had and how more orphanages like Bulembu should be opened up.

Furthermore, the discrepancies in the distribution and consumption of these ‘things’ had a very specific ‘social life’ when it came to how many of the people in Bulembu viewed the ‘BMS Kids’ identities. Whilst being taken on a tour of the neighbouring village, *Malanda*, incidentally translated as ‘dumping-site’, my tour-guide, Tony explained to me some of the subterranean social politics existent in the town. Contrary to BMS’s vision of providing Swazi children with care that mimicked ‘traditional’ forms he said; “one of the main things is, these kids, they’re not Swazi anymore. They don’t even speak good Siswati”. He continued, “Who are they going to lead? black Americans?” Similarly, Zandile said to me, “When you grow up you

need to know your land. It's bad when you take a child away. Here they take them away and now they are like black Americans".

These perspectives are resoundingly and somewhat ironically similar to both the anxieties around intercountry adoption and NERCHA's concerns over residential care programmes revealed in Chapter Two. In these perspectives, the children 'rescued', educated, clothed and cared for by BMS are seen to have undergone a transformation, dislocated from place, and irrevocably detached from their 'Swazi' personhood. Like the concerned magazine reader's comments in the opening of this thesis, in the minds of my informants, these children may well have been adopted and flown off to "grow up among the world's wealthiest with more material possessions" than they would have ever had access to. These opinions further mirror the problems of privilege raised by the director of NERCHA. He expressed that residential care privileges some and not others and hence is antithetical to an "equity" model of care and NERCHA's goal to foster "community commitment to the welfare of children.

In this way, whether or not the children in BMS's care came to/would come to fully embody the organisation's vision of growing into tomorrow's leaders, their personal transformation was marked and made meaningful by a perceived difference on the part of many of the town's residents not directly involved in childcare. The gift of care and the necessary objects attached to this care, particularly clothing which as Turner (1993) suggests produces a "social skin" through its dual possibility "of touching the body and facing outwards", was central to the BMS children's 'conversion'. In the minds of my informants the objects attached to the interventionist gift ironically came to construct the child subject as somewhat dislocated from an 'essential'/authentic Swazi self and henceforth separate them from the rest of the townspeople (Hansen, 2004:372; Miller, 2010). The BMS children can also be seen to have attained what Pierre Bourdieu (1993) calls "social/cultural" capital, an embodiment of privilege that works to separate them from the Bulembu's other residents (Cheney, 2007: 14). Furthermore, although not all the children under BMS's care were categorically "orphans" in the sense that, as Lorraine put it, "there is always someone out there", these perspectives point to the ways in which the social category of "the orphan" was *produced*. The emergence of the BMS children as "the orphans" who prior to their arrival in Bulembu were unlikely to have been considered so, was

shaped by their bounded and sheltered categorization as children separate from ‘the other’ and in need of preferential treatment and special protection (Meintjes & Giese, 2006:407). Here, alongside the processes of the children’s removal and subsequent subjectification through BMS’s model of care, the act of orphaning emerged as both literal and discursive (Sen, 2005: 463).

Reinforcing Appadurai’s (1998:3) familiar notion that the “commodity is a thoroughly social thing”, these opinions demonstrate that the social consequences of the interventionist gift were widespread. As Stirrat & Henkel (1997) point out in their article *The development gift: the problem of reciprocity in the NGO world*, charity gift giving in the form of material objects, advice and in this context, education can indeed “create a series of problematic relations”. From the ethnographic data presented above, it is clear that not only did BMS’s childcare programme alter the children’s “relationships of belonging”, but, like the social effects often produced by child sponsorship programmes, it produced unintended (material) disjunctures, and disturbed existing social relationships (Bornstein, 2005: 67). The intermingling of the hopeful ideas of Christian humanitarianism and the local (albeit microcosmic) political economy had the paradoxical effect of reinforcing the very inequalities that they endeavored to transcend. Hence, where Stirrat and Henkel point to the reciprocal problems that occur between donor and receiver in the case of charitable donations/aid, a subject to which much research has been focused, this research importantly highlights both the external and *internal* politics of gift giving.

3.5 conditional care?

As a last point of analytical reflection, I would like to briefly revisit Meintjes and Giese’s (2006:305) work on the *Mythologies of orphanhood in the contexts of AIDS*. The authors examine local notions of vulnerability in order to problematise the obsessive (humanitarian) focus on orphanhood in the context of AIDS irrespective of shifts towards “the more inclusive terminology of Orphans and Vulnerable Children”. They argue that the narrow labeling of ‘the orphan’ can obscure the vulnerabilities of children living in poverty more generally. I would like to extend this critique.

Here, the exclusive focus on “the orphans” obscured the vulnerabilities of BMS’s employees in general and as we have seen, thoroughly contributed to the bifurcation

of a single social world. Yet, BMS's limited focus on 'their children', and subsequently the visible unequal dissemination of things, or what Elizabeth Povinelli (2006:68) refers to as the "unequal distribution of hope and despair" is not necessarily an organisational oversight but is rather symptomatic of a broader, almost seamless humanitarian preoccupation with 'saving children'. As Malkki has shown (2011, loc: 1055), irrespective of today's widely disseminated image of children as competent active agents in their own right, as promulgated by the CRC, children, particularly those wearing 'labels' of vulnerability are placed on an "ethereal pedestal in the transnational" humanitarian sphere, "intensively commodified...sacralised as priceless" and persistently and artificially "set apart from adults in an infantile utopian dimension" (Hart, 2002: 8). As we have seen above, the affective dimension of the child further draws attention to the paradoxically conditional nature of humanitarian interventionist reason (Ticktin, loc: 5238). Altogether It is clear that in the process of directly empowering the Bulembu youth, the programme significantly detracted from the wellbeing of adults who facilitated their empowerment, dislodged their responsibility and obscured their own vulnerability in a process that may well undermine the efficacy of BMS's vision of sustainability (Bornstein, 2006). Although one would expect that new investment and the restoration of the town would better the lives of its inhabitants, relations between Bulembu residents; employers and employees were fraught, and tensions between Bulembu and the neighbouring village of Malanda, were particularly so.¹⁹ Where much research emphasises the ways in which children stand as quintessential humanitarian subjects, here I reveal the ways this global preoccupation with the child recipient can more generally work to obscure the invaluable role of adults in their lives – a critique that takes further recent efforts that attempt to deconstruct the rigid binary between 'child' and 'adult' rather than seeing them as reciprocally occupying the same space in the world.

3.6 Conclusion

Together this chapter sought to move from concerns over the preferred physical placement of children to an exploration of the intentions behind, and sociological effects thereof, of BMS's socio-spiritual model of childcare. Continuing the theme of dislocation that surfaced strongly in Chapter Two, it demonstrates the ways that

¹⁹ Since the time of my research these tensions have arisen resulting in a number of incidents and staff dismissals/departures (Perscomm., 2013).

BMS's model of care, through physically, spiritually and materially separating the children from the rest of the townspeople unexpectedly worked to produce a further set of dislocations. I illustrated how these demarcations created and continue to create tenuous employer-employee relationships, which in turn could inadvertently undermine BMS's visions of self-sustainability and holistic model of childcare.

Chapter four: “we’re just doing what we have been called to do...”

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have sought to bring to light what theorists have referred to as “the politics of compassion”: the ground level workings of the ‘philanthropic impulse to give’ (Kennedy, 2004; Uheling, 2008; Bornstein, 2009). In doing so, I also inadvertently revealed some of the concerns raised by social theorists around institutional models of childcare (Tolfree, 2003: 9; Meintjes et al, 2007; UNICEF, 2004a; Murtaugh, 2010). In Chapter One, I examined my young informants’ perceptions of space to reveal their feelings of isolation and dislocation from the rest of Swaziland and its potential implications for their inevitable reintegration - a common critique of children’s villages that “serve to create a ‘community of families’” but “simultaneously isolate the children who live in them by restricting their access to the outside world” (Tolfree, 2003: 9). In Chapter Two, I pointed to another commonly highlighted pitfall of the residential care models; that of the potential impact that high rates of staff “turn over” can have on children and young people that have already experienced traumatic parental loss (Murtaugh, 2010: 23). In addition to revealing a plethora of other unexpected localised consequences of the developmental project, these factors both re-affirm the widely perceived status of residential childcare as a “temporary last resort” and drive a wedge between” the taken-for-granted, often deemed “morally-untouchable” act of “doing good” (Meintjes et al., 2007: 1; Fisher, 1997; Fassin, 2011). However, as Michel Foucault reminds us in his essay on Enlightenment (1984) “criticism means analyzing its limits and reflecting on them” (Foucault, 1984), this chapter aims to critically assess the limits to a critique of compassion and examine the factors that have led to the emergence of an organisation such as this. This inevitably involves a broadening of my analytical frame to explore in more detail the sociopolitical and economic realities that drive the ‘project of child saving’ and the perceived need to remove children from their places of origin and place them in residential care.

4.2 Last resorts and best interests

On a second visit to Bulembu, I arranged a final meeting with the director of childcare to explain my findings and gain his feedback. In particular I asked him to share his thoughts on the commonly held last resort status of residential care as opposed to the ‘best interest’ standing of community (i.e. NCP point) based care. In a firm affirmation of BMS’s vision and subtle denigration of the NCP point model the director said:

“Here kids are being thrown away. People can’t cope. We take them out of that environment and let them learn to create change. This is long-term thinking. At the NCP points, what happens when the kids go home? Who takes care of them then? What do they eat there?”

He ended off by stating that what Bulembu does in relation to the ever-increasing number of vulnerable children in the country, is “just a drop in the ocean”. He re-stated that they (BMS management) are “just doing” what they “have been called to do”.

This notion of children being “thrown away” was passionately reiterated by Justine in the many conversations that we had. Whereas, the director understood it as related to severe socio-economic pressure and an overburdened inability of families to cope with the increasing number of children in need of care, Justine related it to what she believed was a growing lack and “fears of” familial responsibility. For instance, she expressed:

“There are a lot of issues in Swaziland with childcare, poverty, stigma and fear of responsibility...there is a lot of fear of responsibility in this country. The home visits, when they do happen can be very difficult. Sometimes the relatives don’t come to the gate to greet their children. So we call them now and again to remind them that they have children up here”.

In another conversation, Justine reaffirmed:

“In this country from what I see there is no longer the spirit of taking care. Sometimes you find an orphan, whose aunt is a company manager but they can’t or won’t take care of the child. They don’t want the responsibility. For me the family should take the child, the extended family even if they have to struggle. But here, it’s the orphanages that are the first resort”.

Furthermore, in a statement that mirrors social theorists’ (Meintjies et al, 2007; Tolfree, 2009) and policy maker’s concerns that institutions can often act as “magnets” for families unwilling/unable to care for their children, Justine said:

“It’s orphanages here that are the first resort...It doesn’t make sense and it’s passed as normal...even though they are not ‘orphan orphans’ and an orphanage is supposed to be the last resort. I can’t say it is the last. It’s something I fail to understand”

Justine poignantly illustrated this point by stating that often she sees family members coming up to Bulembu to visit their children driving “fancy company cars”. The notion that places like Bulembu are not viewed as a last resort, at least in the minds of many people who struggle to take care of their own children was tangentially affirmed by many of the house aunties’ unanimous agreement in the focus group that I conducted that, “there should be more orphanages like this”, because, as the women agreed, these children “have better childhoods” than their own.

Further questioning the increasingly complex notion of last resort, I asked Justine to speak more about why it was then, that BMS chose to remove children from their places of origin and why Welfare does not work to intervene in difficult familial circumstances before “signing them off” to places like Bulembu. Justine responded:

“As a social worker, wherever I used to go (to assess a child’s living situation) I would try to do everything before removing them. But here, if the child needs help we will try to help them and get them signed off as soon as possible. It is in their best interests - for the sake of their future. There was one case where a mother was not working, she was a

widow and she drinks. Her two children, a boy aged 10 and his younger sister had to stop going to school in order to work. The kids looked like animals and one of the schoolteachers in the area phoned us to collect them. Welfare should have stepped in to help but they didn't. So we just decided to pull the kids because they were so vulnerable. And this case is so common".

Irrespective of the limitations of the BMS model explored in Chapter Two and Three, these perspectives point to the perceived necessity of organisations such as Bulembu with their long-term vision of 'child saving' and 'holistic' residential childcare. In the context of the ever widening gap between the ideal and the reality of the capacity and willingness of the extended family to 'absorb' an increasing number of children facing parental loss, these views readily unsettle the strict definitions of last resorts and best interests as defined in official CRC informed children's policy documents and orphan care recommendations. Although a seemingly unlikely correlation, this data echoes Nancy Scheper-Hughes's work (2003) on the global traffic in human organs and her conceptualisation of the kidney as "the organ of last resort". Highlighting the fine line between choice and coercion, here, the option of placing children in an institutional-type environment becomes parents/relatives/social workers' only shield against over burdened caregiving responsibility, "hunger, debt, penury" and abuse (Scheper-Hughes, 2000: 1646) Justine's central point that even if there is "always someone out there", to care for closely or distantly related kin, a statement that indeed problematises the often narrow constitution of an orphan in the face of broad patterns of social parenting, her assertion that "in this country" there is not necessarily "a spirit of taking care" simultaneously supports the need to de-romanticize the (predominantly anthropologically promulgated) resilience of the African extended family in the context of ruptured familial networks of care.

Furthermore, whether or not the care that BMS provides is in the best interests of the children and young people who have been brought to live there (best interests complicated by the fact that children themselves are largely 'unable' to consider what this may indeed constitute (Cheney, 2007)) these perspectives poignantly reveal the stark lack of middle-ground care options available for children in Swaziland - factors that may unsurprisingly dampen any existing 'spirit' of care.

According to a comparative UNAIDS study conducted in 2008 on *Alternative care for children in Southern Africa*, out of the three other countries under study, namely; Malawi, Zambia and South Africa, Swaziland has the highest rate of orphaning, the greatest number of children living without both parents (34%) and, given Swaziland Welfare Department's (SWD) overburdened social assistance role, the "most incomprehensive systems in place" to deal with these statistical urgencies (UNAIDS, 2008: 26). The same report states that with a total of 0.13 %, "Swaziland places more children in children's homes than the average assessed four countries". The remaining children in need of extra-familial care are informally placed within the extended family, with proximal access to local NCPs and (if an OVC status is met) receive a monthly maintenance grant.

Moreover, as revealed in Chapter Two, Swaziland's NCP initiative coordinated by NERCHA and the DPM's office and funded by Global Fund, UNICEF and other partner NGO's is considered the most culturally-appropriate, best interest' first-line form of response for children given its community-based status (perscom., 2012; Lumphondvo, 2012). However, as reported in two recent newspaper articles in August and November this year, NERCHA's NCPs are being drastically affected by Swaziland's escalating economic-crisis induced food insecurity and are facing debilitating food shortages. Mirroring BMS's childcare director's concerns, both articles report that many NCPs have not received food in over a year (Lumphondvo, 2012; Hlatshwayo, 2012). In November 2012, in a *Times of Swaziland* article, a caregiver from the Sgidzi NCP is quoted to having said; "initially there were 49 children (coming to the care point) but after the food shortage last year the number went down to 20...upon realising there was nothing to eat they stayed away from the NCP". She explains further that she and the other caregivers started bringing food from their homes but they got to a point where "the little food" they could contribute was "no more available...and as a result could not cook for the children and a majority, especially the younger ones, stopped coming" to the NCP.

4.3 Over-extended, extended families

In this sense, it is clear that available childcare options are starkly polarised into either formal, non-governmentally funded residential care facilities or informal community based, governmentally and/or externally funded care. Irrespective of governmental

concerns around the “proper place” for Swazi children and broad recognition of the ‘over-extended’ nature of extended families, few intermediary care options exist for children in Swaziland. This reality that reminds us of the opening of this thesis, with the Swazi government’s decision to halt intercountry adoption, with hopes of nationalistic “culture-keeping” through the promotion local adoption (Jacobson, 2008; Yngvesson, 2009).

During my time in Bulembu, I spent a lot of time with Robyn, the previous owner and manager of Bulembu Babies (then, ABC). When Robyn had started ABC in Big Bend, it was one of the first children’s homes in Swaziland. She told me that in the early 1990s she had seen a need and had “worked with the police to establish a home”, where she would bring babies in need of care from the nearby squatter camp and hospital. After setting up ABC, Robyn started working on making legal “adoption workable”, which at the time was virtually non-existent. Over the years, Robyn and her husband Pete had two of their own children and adopted four more, three boys and a girl. She had dedicated her life to raising and caring for children in need of extra-familial care and above all advocating for both national and inter-country adoption in Swaziland. She repeatedly told me that her “heart was in adoption”, because of the “incredible happiness” the process had brought to both the children and families she had united. Having been foundational in establishing Swaziland’s adoption system and having processed over 50 (including both national and intercountry) adoptions since she founded ABC, she was disheartened by BMS’s decision to close all adoptions (perscomm., 2011). Interested in my field of research, Robyn showed me her adoption records, taking me through case after case, complete with official documents, letters of correspondence and photographs. She remembered the details of every adoption she had processed. Interested in the DPM’s assertion of the need to promote local adoption in the context of the dynamic nature of family formation in Swaziland, I asked Robyn if she could put me in touch with Swazi nationals that had adopted children from ABC prior to BMS’s ban. I managed to contact and organise meetings with two women who were willing to speak to me about their adoption experiences.

Notable patterns emerged out of my informants’ adoption narratives. Both women were unable to have their own children. Dudu had chosen not to for religious reasons

as she had decided not to marry and Mona was unable to fall pregnant. Both women were middle to upper class career women; Dudu owned her own dental practice in Manzini and Mona worked for World Vision. In a country where formal adoption remains a “rare practice”, because as Dudu asserted, “extended families...are supposed to cushion each other”, both women shared very similar social experiences/challenges of adopting their children. Their experiences provided an important counter-voice to the government’s position on adoption.

Dudu expressed that her main challenge during the adoption was her family. She was worried about how they would react. She expressed; “how would they take it if I adopted...you know to bringing a strange child into the home, a complete strange child. That was my main worry”. Dudu said that overtime her child has been accepted into her family and that “people looked strangely” but that she was “not bothered”. She clarified, “In Swaziland you must at least have your own baby. It’s a challenge. But I prepared myself to fight. I don’t care what people say”.

Similarly, Mona said, “here, if you don’t have your own children, you are cursed. I don’t think it will ever change...but Swazi’s don’t think about adoption...they would never bother, only foreigners do. There is big stigma”. She went on to explain the challenges she had and is still facing given her decision to adopt.

“Initially, when I decided to adopt my family were disinterested. They didn’t want to help me. But now they realise that they should have given me one of their children so they could achieve what I have when I die. There is big resentment in the family because my adopted kids will now get everything”.

Although both women did not regret their decision to adopt (in fact both asserted it was the best decision they had ever made) and both their immediate families have come to accept their adoptions, these perspectives poignantly reveal the ironies embedded in the government’s recent policy changes to halt intercountry adoption and henceforth, the simultaneous need to address local resistances to local adoption.

Furthermore during my second field visit to Swaziland, I noticed an advertisement pinned to The Mall notice board outside the *pick n pay* in Mbabane. The poster read: “*Looking for foster parent/s to foster three boys ages 5, 7 and 10. Please contact 6365578*”. I noticed that the poster was replicated and pinned to notice boards all over Mbabane. I did some additional research to ascertain that the woman, Diedre who had placed the advertisement was trying to find foster homes for her sister’s children. Her sister, a single mother had recently passed away and she could not adequately take care of an additional three children, having two of her own already. Diedre told me that she had been waiting for “too long” for Social Welfare to intervene, did not want to place “the boys in a home” (by implication an institutional orphanage) and “had no other options”.

Although a minor case study requiring a significant amount of follow-up research, it stands as another symptomatic example of the lack of middle ground options available for children in Swaziland and the government’s continued (over) reliance on the extended familial networks of care and informal crisis-led fostering to ‘absorb’ children in need of care. Yet, as outlined in Article 20 of the CRC, from a children’s rights perspective (an approach the Swazi government paradoxically heralds when advocating the importance of community based care”, a child “temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment or whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment”, as in the example above, should be “entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the state” when (George, van Oudenhoven & Rekha, 2003: 344). Although there are alarming reports about the negative effects of foster care on children, in many countries (reviewed practices of) formal foster care remain a viable and valuable system of “family preservation” and a way in which to facilitate care-arrangements beyond the immediate “biological family” (Bernstein, 2001; Curtis et al., 1999; Kelly, 2000; George et al, 2003: 344-345). Formal foster care is recognised by Swazi law (under Child Care Service Order CCSO, Section 11), however, placement carried out by the SWO is very rare and implementation remains weak (UNAIDS, 2008). As is the case in many countries in the global South, foster care remains an under-resourced and under-researched area of child protection. Nonetheless, as outlined by George et al, in a study of a wide range of countries “at different stages of economic development” foster care, in its widest elastic and inclusive sense could provide a valuable, and given already existent broad

patterns of social parenting, a culturally-appropriate childcare option. Similarly, the UNAIDS report (2008: 27) suggests that foster care should exist as a temporary option, that if implemented properly and initially remunerated “could lead to adoption”. However, as George et al (2003: 343) suggest, foster care should not be seen as an isolated process but rather as “one of a range of options” addressed “within the context of wider child protective and child development measures”.

4.3 Reflections

Altogether, not only does this ethnographic detail point to the need to reassess the structural gaps pertinent to childcare in the country, gaps that complicate the question of a child’s “proper place” and drive individuals to answer “God’s calling” and validate the social consequences of this “calling”, it also highlights significant epistemic gaps in the literature grappling with alternative care arrangements for children in Southern Africa in the context of the epidemic. Much of this literature often referred to as a proponent of a “social rupture thesis” emphasises the break down of family structures and safety nets and the increasing burden of care as a result of the epidemic (Foster & Williamson 2000; Chirwa, 2002 Bellamy, 2004; Madhaven. 2006; Abebe & Aase, 2007; Mathambo & Gibbs, 2009). Another, predominantly anthropological body of literature attempts to deconstruct these rigid conceptualisations of vulnerability to highlight, the continued importance of the rural home and the resilience and adaptive capacities of families and communities faced with the multiple social strains caused by the epidemic (Henderson, 1999, 2003, 2006; Meintjes & Bray, 2005; Meintjes & Giese, 2006). Where anthropological research on children in Africa often centres on traditional models of social relationships these studies, particularly those focused on South Africa emphasise the ability of families to cope with the increasing number of children in need of care given pre-existing patterns of social parenting and a historical predisposition to coping with ‘domestic fluidity’ and familial fragmentation due to politically produced labour migration (Spiegel, Watson & Wilkinson, 1996). The trend to emphasise the dynamic nature of family formation and social parenthood is common to an established tradition of anthropological approaches to the study of kinship. Fiona Bowie’ anthology *Cross-cultural approaches to adoption* (2004) is exemplary in this respect. Building and expanding much earlier structural functionalist approaches the authors extend the concept of adoption to include informal fostering as a cross cultural practice, across

Africa, Oceania, Central and South America. Through various detailed ethnographic analyses the contributors demonstrate how adoption is part of a “more comprehensive system of exchange that may also involve land, goods, labour information and different categories of people dependent on gender and kinship status across cultures” (Bowie, 2004: 7). In order to frame adoption, challenge dualities and denaturalize views on how families should be and look, these studies importantly revisit the notion that biology and culture and the ways in which people define and create relatedness are cross culturally variant and spatiotemporally contingent (Carsten 2000; Seligmann, 2006: 546). However, where all these studies emphasise the importance of understanding the broad nature of informal fostering and adopting in (largely) non-western contexts, there is very little anthropological research that explores the realities and possibilities of both formal/legal fostering and adoption (both intercountry and national) irrespective of the epidemiologically related increase in the number of adoptable and formally ‘fosterable’ children. The literatures addressing these practices are predominantly Euro-American centred. In light of immense social and political upheavals on the African continent in the past few decades, this reality speaks to the persistent romanticisation of the African extended family – an emphasis that problematically establishes overly culturally deterministic theoretical demarcations between ‘western’ and ‘non-western’ models of kinship and potentially obscures any significant structural engagement with more formal models of child protection.

Chapter Five: toward a conclusion



The Bulembu Hills²⁰

5.1 Leaving

I began this study with a seemingly lighthearted excerpt from a women's magazine. In reaction to the increase of celebrity intercountry adoptions, the reader's concerns over where orphaned and vulnerable children "would be better off", shed light on questions of rising importance in countries like Swaziland facing an unprecedented number of children in need of extra-familial care. The excerpt pointed to mounting cultural anxieties around intercountry adoption on a global scale given the removal of children from their places of birth. Yet, this notion of *where* children would be 'best off' also opened up an avenue into thinking about the manifold ways in which the nation space becomes "both political and strategic" and most importantly, how these questions are also equally pertinent in the context of localised attempts to 'rescue', care for and 're-make' the lives of children in need of care (Lefebvre, (1976: 31 cited by Henderson, 2009)).

My research into the intentions and practices of a single local faith based 'solution' to the rising number of children in need of care provided an extended case study into these politically fraught questions. Gauging as many perspectives as possible within Bulembu as well as situating the case study within its broader political-economic context, I attempted to provide the reader with a nuanced perspective of the complex sociopolitical consequences of the seemingly straightforward and a-political project of 'child saving'. In particular, I hope to have shown how the children's village was imagined, inhabited and experienced by my participants, how essentially,

²⁰ Available [online]: <http://www.cybertonature.co.za/swaziland.html> [02/01/2013]

organisational goals were 'lived', shaping the qualitative experience of both childhood and caregiving. The contradictions and conditions of interventionist help revealed in the chapters above work to both unsettle Bulembu's utopian-like vision of rescuing Swaziland's most vulnerable children and complicate the notion of a 'proper' place for children in need of extra-familial care.

In a final reflection on the data collected in this study, I have found Moss and Petrie's (2006) book, *From Children's Services to Children's Spaces* particularly useful. The authors challenge the way "we view public state provision for children and young people" (Henderson, 2009: 44). They argue that the narrow conceptualisation of 'children's places' is tightly linked to the ways children themselves are conceptualised; "in need of rescue and protection" and as "needy, weak and poor; requirements that necessarily involve the creation of tightly bound places under strict surveillance and notions that are clearly reflected in BMS's conception of how and where 'their' children should grow. Moreover, Moss and Petrie (2006:12) familiarly argue that state provisions such as these become "technologies for acting upon children...to produce specific, predetermined and adult defined outcomes". Rather than aimed at predetermined outcomes - a goal entrenched in Bulembu's vision of raising the 'leaders of tomorrow', the authors argue that children's services should focus on "creating spaces for living childhoods in the present" (*ibid*). This they necessitate, calls for a shift in thinking about Children's *places* to creating children's *spaces* – spaces which do not simply imply a physical place, a setting for "groups of children" but instead, a spatial domain "of social practices and relationships", spaces that allow differing "perspectives and forms of expression where there is room for dialogue, confrontation... where children and others can speak and be heard". In the context of an unyielding, and as we have seen deeply ironic emphasis placed on the physical (and by association sociocultural) place children should grow and the methods of childrearing that should be utilised as discussed above, I find this shift in thinking particularly resonant. BMS's insular and exclusionary vision of care provision, and their goals towards sustainability would perhaps be more productively thought of in these ways.

Yet, in light of my data and the global humanitarian obsession with ‘child saving’ more broadly, I would argue further that in order to move toward a more ethical ‘distribution’ of hope and help, we need to broaden our understanding of *children’s* spaces too, and think of them more in terms of habitable spaces for *both* children and adults, in which the conditional lines of vulnerability are blurred in an attempt to build an environment in which collective needs and aspirations are addressed and in which relationships between children and between adults and children are fostered. As gestured towards in my final chapter, I would also like to consider whether in fact this preoccupation with place, with the place of a child and the national politics around the placement of ‘socially displaced’ does not, as Henderson (2009) highlights, in fact point to a “narrowing of focus away from” or even obscure the “broader forms of social inequalities that we are not prepared to scrutinize too closely?” (Henderson, 2009: 44)

Altogether, my intention was not simply to offer a single line of critique, the default position often taken by social theorists working within the development field but rather to provide context to organisational practice, to expose the taken for granted and to ask the simple questions that often remain unasked in a context where the urgent nature of the work and the constant struggle for funding provide little time and space for critical reflection. Of course, upon leaving, the avenues of investigation are far wider than on arriving; yet I hope that these reflections will leave an imprint in and of themselves and guide the growth of BMS’s practices to come. And although this may itself represent a version of, albeit an altered utopia, I remain convinced by the power of research and of the slow, yet increasingly conscious realization of thought into practice. After all, without some abstract vision of utopia there is no way to define or even begin to describe, “the port to which we might want to sail” (Harvey, 2000: 189).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Amanda's letter

One of the methods that I used was to ask the girls in House A to write down their wishes and dreams in a book that I made them. This excerpt clearly indicates both Amanda's longing for home and her wishes to have a cellphone, a quintessential 'symbol' of connectivity and in this case with home and the world beyond Bulembu. The BMS kids were not allowed to have cellphones. Although it is unclear here, she indicates the reason why - because "some" children have them and others do not.

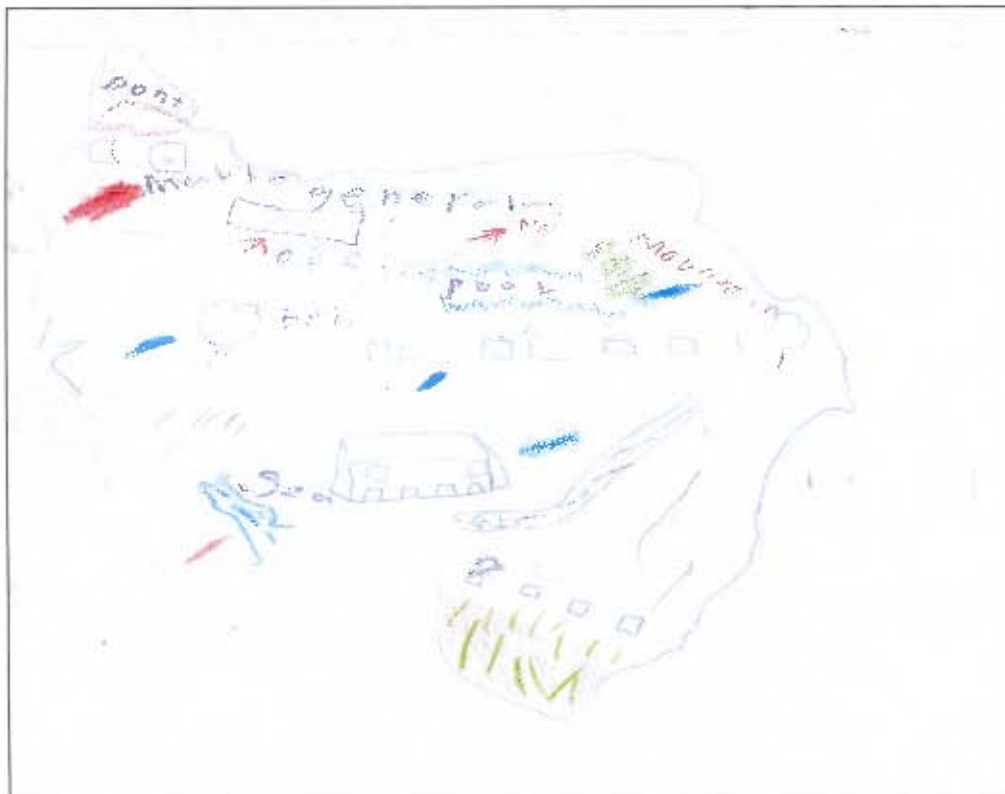
Last night I dreamt .. of me going for
a visit to home and having my cellph
ne. and I came with it here to
Bulembu. then I showed Auntie
Gennie she then changed her
mind and said we are allowed to
have cellphones because some
of us have them

Appendix B: The Island



Appendix C: Off-limits

- i) A map of Bulembu town, areas shaded in red indicate areas that the BMS kids are not allowed to go. See word's 'don't' and 'no'. This map also identifies Bulembu as an island, with the word 'sea' in the bottom left.



ii) Another map of the town: see areas shaded in red, the arrow at the bottom of the drawing points to the boarder gate. The arrow on the top right hand side points to the mountains, where the neighbouring village Malanda is situated.

